

LONDON^{THE} READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 919.—VOL. XXXVI.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 11, 1880.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[A SECRET OF THE PAST.]

VERA'S VENTURE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"So Fair Her Face," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XIII.

ESTABLISHED AT MILVERSTONE.

In this false world we do not always know
Who are our friends, and who our enemies:
We all have enemies and all want friends.

ESTHER MORTON received very quietly the information that Miss Rivers would like her to go and take up her quarters at Milverstone.

She was a most undemonstrative young person, and she only courtesied and said she should be very happy to do anything Miss Rivers might require.

Nellie, the impulsive, thought her strangely cold and stiff; people generally thawed to her as soon as she spoke to them. This young woman was doubtless awed by her presence, as silly people were sometimes, till they came to know her.

"I should like you to come at once," she said, "there are some things I want done just in my own way and under my own eyes. If you will be at Milverstone at ten o'clock to-morrow I will tell the housekeeper to arrange about a room for you, and you can take your meals with my maid."

Esther Morton was very thankful, and said so; she only hesitated a little on the score that Mrs.

Deacon had made the existing arrangements for her and might be annoyed at her leaving the lodging she had selected without giving her notice.

Nellie laughed.

"I am the autocrat here," she said, "Mrs. Deacon is one of my prime ministers; I will settle all that with her, Esther, you need not be uneasy on that score."

She said good morning and went away, leaving Esther Morton looking after her with a curious expression on her face that attracted the attention of Miss Jones.

"You look as if you did not care to go," she said.

"Not care to go there?" the girl said. "To Milverstone? It was the dearest wish of my heart. I can hardly believe it is accomplished."

"Good gracious, why?" asked Miss Jones, in amazement. "Do you know Miss Rivers?"

"No."

"You never saw her before?"

"No."

"Then why on earth did you want to go to her place?"

"I can hardly explain. I spoke strongly in saying it was the dearest wish of my heart. You can hardly think what such a prospect is to me after all I have undergone. I have known what it means to go starving through London streets, and it seems like Paradise to me to think of going to a place like that to work."

"And to such a dear young lady too."

"Of course. Miss Rivers is amiable, no doubt."

"Amiable? She's just like an angel," said the respectable Miss Jones, who had been

brought up with a proper reverence for her superiors, as village girls mostly are. "No one is allowed to want long here, I can tell you. If you play your cards well there's no knowing what she mayn't do for you."

"I mean to play them well."

"You looked at her just now as she went out as if you would like to murder her."

"Murder who?"

"Miss Rivers."

"What for?"

"That's best known to yourself. You say you don't know her."

"I never saw her in my life till the other day. Why should I want to murder her, especially when she is going to give me just the work I like and take me into her house?"

"I don't know—but your face looked like it."

"Your fancy plays you strange tricks, Miss Jones. I am not likely to wish Miss Rivers any harm."

"It was not fancy," Miss Jones said to herself, in the solitude of her own room, when she had retired to rest. "She looked like a devil. Oh, my! suppose Mrs. Deacon heard me, I should lose my place in a week."

And then she did a little penance of her own for having used the awful word, and returned to the subject of her lodger in her own mind.

"I don't like her," she said to herself. "I'm afraid of her, and that's a fact. She isn't quite what she seems, and she's here for some purpose. I wonder what it is? I can see every time that anyone speaks to her what an effort it is for her to say 'ma'am,' or 'sir,' and to make her courtesy. She hasn't been used to it, and it don't come easy; and she knows Mr. Delamere too—I am

sure of it by the way she looked after him to-day. She's not a good woman whatever letters of introduction she may have."

Miss Jones's opinion was shared in some degree by others.

Mrs. Carrington was very much averse to the plan of bringing Esther Morton into the house to work, and took a dislike to her from the first.

"My dear," she said, "could you not have arranged in some other way? She looks like a young woman who will give herself airs."

"If she does it will be easy to get rid of her," Nellie said. "I am going to have my own way in this, Mrs. Carrington, please don't worry me about it."

"It is no business of mine, of course," the lady replied, and she said no more.

She had her own opinion of what Lady Rivers would say when she came to hear of it, and indeed that worthy lady coming over to see how things were going on and to offer to help her dear niece held up her hands in horror at Nellie's indiscretion.

"To take a strange person without any character or recommendation into the house in that fashion," she exclaimed. "Why, who knows what she is?"

"No one," said the housekeeper, to whom she spoke. "And I must say the young person, though she may be very decent and all that, is sadly wanting in politeness and respect. She will not say 'ma'am' when she speaks to me, and is quite haughty in her manner to Wilson."

Wilson was Miss Rivers's maid, a steady, respectable girl, without much spirit or dash about her, but fitted very well for the station she occupied.

"You should make this woman, whoever she is, behave with proper respect to you, Mrs. Downing," Lady Rivers said. "I cannot think what my niece is about; the girl may be a thief for anything she knows. She may be murdered in her bed some night and all her jewels stolen."

"It will not be by me, Lady Rivers."

The lady turned round with a little scream to see the very person she had spoken of standing behind her. There she was, with her objectionable glossy hair done low down on her forehead, and her dark eyes that always looked somehow as if they could read every one's thoughts, and her graceful figure and lady-like bearing—a most exasperating person, whom Lady Rivers would have given much to expose and turn out.

"How dare you come in here and listen?" she asked, almost choking with anger, "and how dare you speak to me in that insolent manner?"

"Anyone may dare defend themselves," the girl said, without an atom of anger or offence in her manner. "I was not aware your ladyship was here, or I should have waited till you were gone."

"You should have knocked at the door. Have you no manners that you burst in like that without knocking?"

"I beg your ladyship's pardon, I did knock—twice," Esther Morton said. "It was necessary I should see Mrs. Downing about these things," and she laid some delicate things on the table as she spoke. "I could not help hearing my own name, and your ladyship's extremely charitable opinion of me. I have no intention of murdering Miss Rivers or any one else, and I can satisfy anyone whose business it is to know as to my antecedents."

"You audacious hussy," almost screamed Lady Rivers. She was always at a disadvantage, for she never could keep her temper. "How dare you speak to me like that? I will have you turned out of the house—I will have you exposed, and—"

"There is nothing to expose, my lady," returned Esther. "If Miss Rivers chooses to turn me out of the house at your bidding she will do so, of course. Still I scarcely think she will be so unjust to a stranger and one who is trying to serve her."

"Trying to serve her, you audacious creature!" Lady Rivers said, nearly choked by her astonished indignation. "I shall indeed use

my utmost influence with your patroness to have you discharged. It is not meet that a woman like you should have a footing here."

She swept out of the room in a fury, and Esther Morton turned to the housekeeper.

"How have I been unfortunate enough to offend her ladyship?" she asked.

"I don't know," Mrs. Downing replied, "I think your manner is not quite respectful enough to please her. She is used to be submitted to entirely."

"I have submitted to her as much as possible," the girl retorted. "I am not engaged to work for her, and Miss Rivers makes no complaint of what her ladyship calls insolence, at least she has made none to me."

"Miss Rivers is a very amiable young lady, and would make more allowances than her aunt," Mrs. Downing said, quietly. She did not like Esther Morton's manner any more than Lady Rivers did, but she was too politic to find as much fault. "Still I think under the circumstances, my dear, you might try and be a little more respectful. It would grieve Miss Nellie to think you had been rude to her aunt."

"I shall always endeavour to please my mistress in all things," was the haughty retort, with such a spiteful emphasis on the word "mistress" that Mrs. Downing looked up in surprise. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"What I say," Esther replied. "I do not put double meanings to all my words as some people do."

The housekeeper was puzzled and by no means comfortable. Whether it existed in her fancy only or not she could not tell, but there seemed a general atmosphere of discomfort and unpleasantness about the house now. It might be that Nellie was showing a curious interest in this strange young woman, and exalting her to a position that made her servants jealous. One cause of the odd position into which Esther Morton had suddenly jumped was the illness of Nellie's maid, Wilson, an illness which dated from the very evening of the sewing woman's arrival. She could not tell what ailed her, she said; she felt every now and then as if she were dying, and her pale face and nerveless limbs simply attested the truth of her assertion.

Nellie was indulgent and generous to her servants, and she let this strange girl take Wilson's place a good deal, finding that among her other accomplishments she could dress hair very nicely.

Neville Delamere expostulated with her on what he considered her folly, but she answered him as she had answered anyone else, that he was prejudiced.

"Do let the poor thing alone," she said, "she has never hurt you."

"And I don't want to hurt her, but I don't think you are wise in trusting her so much."

"I don't trust her."

"Yes, you do, you leave your keys about, and that poor devil of a Wilson is not fit to look after anything. By the way what is the matter with her? She looks as if she was dying."

"I don't know, Mr. Leicester thinks it is debility. I am very thankful that I have Esther Morton in her place."

"I am not, I feel sure mischief will come of it."

"Why?"

"I don't know why. That's just it. By the way is that estimable young person afraid of me?"

"Afraid of you. Why should she be?"

"I don't know, but she avoids me most religiously. I suppose she is conscious that I want to see her face and is determined I shan't."

"And very proper too, sir; she does not want to be stared at. Let her alone."

Neville Delamere had no intention of letting Nellie's new pet, as he called her, alone, and he watched his opportunity and pounced upon her one day when she could make no escape. Again she turned her head away and hid her face.

"Nonsense," he said, taking hold of her by the arm. "Let me look at you, my dear; pretty girls are not generally so shy of me."

She turned her head and looked him full in the face. He stared at her as if he had seen a

ghost, and recoiled as if she had given him a blow.

"Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, in a choking voice. "You?"

"Yes, Mr. Delamere, are you satisfied?"

"What are you doing here?"

"That is my business," she replied, with a bitter smile curling on her lips. "I am not going to tell you."

Mrs. Downing meeting Mr. Delamere as he came away from that interview asked him if he were ill. His face was as the face of a man who has had some awful shock, he looked as if he had seen a ghost, the good lady said; and indeed he did.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SURPRISE FOR MR. DELAMERE.

How came you here?
What evil fortune brought you?—what pretences?
Was ever chance so cruel?

With a cold, pitiless smile, almost mocking in its character, Esther Morton had stood without stirring a muscle of face or limb, and looked down calmly upon the perturbed features of Neville Delamere as he gazed at her with a species of fascination that rendered him speechless for the moment, unable to form the question that trembled on his lips.

"You look surprised," she said. "You hardly expected to see me here, is that it?"

"No, indeed," he gasped, rather than spoke. "How did you come to this house? In Heaven's name, what brought you to such a pass?"

"Perhaps you would have preferred to have me starve," she said, quietly.

"Starve?"

Esther Morton shrugged her shoulders.

"I have been very near it, I assure you," she answered. "What was I to do? Accept my fate, or take whatever offered? I preferred the latter alternative, and chance, fortune, call it what you will, brings me under the same roof with you."

"You are sure it was chance?" said Neville Delamere, in a suspicious tone. "You did not know that you would find me here?"

"Who was to tell me?" asked Esther Morton, with the same imperturbable air, "and without being told, how was it possible for me to imagine that the Mr. Delamere whom I heard spoken of as the affianced husband of the rich heiress of Milverstone Grange could have any connection with that Neville Delamere who wooed a lonely girl with soft words and false vows till she—who had never trusted man before—was befooled into trusting her heart to the keeping of a man without either honour or remorse, a man who left her with no word of explanation, not even a line of regret or farewell?"

"Bah!" replied Neville Delamere, sneeringly, for he had recovered some of his usual self-possession. "What purpose would that have answered?"

"It might have spared me some pain, or at least suspense," she answered, bitterly. "But I suppose you never thought of what I might endure."

"I don't know what I thought," Neville returned, in moody accents. "I—I was a coward, maybe, not to tell you the truth, that I was forced to go."

"Forced?"

"Yes. What else could I do? Remain and marry you, who were even poorer than myself? It would have been folly, madness! I was wrong, selfishly wrong, I admit, to speak of love to you when I knew it to be hopeless, but I did not mean—"

"Did not mean," Esther Morton repeated, in scornful accents. "Whatever you meant you could at least, and you would if there had been one spark of manhood in your breast, have told me we must part, and not leave me as you did without a single word to relieve the fears I was fool enough to entertain that some evil had befallen you."

"What can I say more than that I was in

fault, grievously in fault?" pleaded Neville Delamere, who was indeed generally ready enough to admit his shortcomings in such fashion, and even had a firm belief that in so doing he atoned amply for his sins, or at least made such amends as any reasonable being could expect. "Still, I was not quite heartless. In acting as I did I thought it was for the best."

"The best for yourself, no doubt," retorted Esther, with a scornful curl of her lip. "But you may spare yourself any further excuses, Mr. Delamere. I have no desire to hear them, or to hold any other communication with you than is forced upon me by the fact that you are going to marry the lady who is my mistress."

"Ah! how can you speak so calmly of it?" said Mr. Delamere, in vexed tones. "Surely you cannot think of remaining in such a position?"

"I not only think of doing so, but must," Esther emphatically replied. "What other resource have I?"

"That shall be my care," eagerly broke in Neville. "I will find whatever may be necessary, and—"

"Make use of your wife's money to get me out of the way," sarcastically observed Esther Morton. "Thank you, Mr. Delamere, but I do not intend to go. I would rather earn the bread I eat by my own labour than be indebted to you for it."

"But only consider—"

"What?"

"The—false position it will place me in," urged Mr. Delamere. "How can I possibly endure to see you day after day and treat you as a servant? I must use the word."

"Of course, it is the proper one," coolly returned the girl. "I am content, and can see no reason why you should be otherwise."

"No reason? Are you mad?"

"Perfectly sane, I assure you, Mr. Delamere, and quite resolved to follow the course I have indicated," Esther Morton returned, with cool decision.

"But what if I say you shall not?" said Neville, stopping opposite where she still stood in the same respectful attitude she had at first assumed. "What if I insist upon your leaving at once? A word from me to Miss Rivers will suffice," he added, though he did not feel quite so sure on that point, unless indeed he could assign some cause, for he knew Nellie was not without a will of her own.

"But you will not speak that word," answered Esther, still quite unmoved in manner.

"Why should I not?"

"Why? Oh! there is nothing to prevent you, of course; and if you do—well, in that case I should probably be turned out, as Miss Rivers would hardly care to keep a servant so near her person to whom at one time, and that not so very long since, her intended husband professed love."

"Ah! you would betray me then?" said Neville, a darkling look on his face.

Esther Morton shrugged her shoulders.

"Betray you?" she repeated. "I should of course speak in my own defence if it were necessary; however, I do not think it will be—do you, Mr. Delamere?"

"By Heaven!" he muttered, hoarsely, "I have a mind to try. She would forgive me, I know."

"As you please," mockingly retorted Esther Morton, "but you must make up your mind quickly; for I fancy I hear Miss Rivers's step in the hall. Come, which is it to be—peace or war?"

Neville Delamere looked at her with an undecided air, but there was no time for any reply even if he had settled what answer to give, for Nellie's hand was already on the knob of the door, and the next moment she had entered, Esther making a respectful courtesy and passing out at the same moment, but not before she had darted a parting glance at Neville Delamere—a look that wore something of entreaty, but more of menace—nay, almost of defiance—in its expression.

Nellie caught the glance, and for an instant

rather wondered, in her simple, unsuspecting fashion, what it could possibly mean. But the next moment she told herself that it was all fancy, that she must have imagined it, the notion was quite too ridiculous to be entertained, and she dismissed it from her thoughts at once.

Neville had gone towards the window as she entered, but turned and came towards her now.

"You never told me that you had engaged a new maid, dear," he said. "Where did you pick her up? And what has become of Wilson?"

"Wilson is ill," explained Nellie, "and I was obliged to have someone in her place, you know. It is only a temporary arrangement, of course."

"H'm, so much the better," said Neville.

"Why, dear?" asked Nellie, a little surprised at his tone. "Don't you like her?"

"Like her? Well, it would hardly be fair to take a dislike to a person one has seen for the first time, and that only for a few minutes," answered Mr. Delamere, with an air of candid impartiality. "At the same time I confess—Where did you pick her up?" he asked again, breaking off a little abruptly.

"She was engaged to do some needlework," Nellie once more explained, "and when Wilson fell sick she volunteered to take her place for the time, that's all. Don't you like her?"

"You asked me that before, Nellie," replied Mr. Delamere, with a little touch of reproof in his voice. "I can only give you the same answer—it is impossible to say whether one likes or dislikes a person at first sight. If you are satisfied with her, however, I presume it is a matter of very little consequence whether I approve of her or not."

"Indeed but it does matter very much, Neville," protested Nellie, "you don't suppose, do you, that I would have anyone about me that you objected to?"

"That all depends upon circumstances, my darling," Mr. Delamere said, smiling with an air of superior wisdom that was not quite to Nellie's taste. "I have no doubt that you would consult my wishes, and follow them too, where they did not clash with your own. But I am afraid that it would not do for me to push my authority too far."

"In fact, you consider me—"

"The very dearest of all dear girls, and the best," said Neville, drawing her to him with a caressing gesture, "and certainly to be trusted to select your own attendants without my interference, so say no more on the subject, I beg."

So it dropped for the time, though Nellie was not quite satisfied with her lover's manner, but Mr. Delamere had already said more than he had intended, not wishing to betray any particular interest in such a matter.

The truth was that though he saw many very strong reasons why Esther Morton should be anywhere rather than at Milverstone Grange, where he might be brought into contact with her very much oftener than was at all desirable, he feared to excite suspicion, such as his guilty conscience told him was sure to be excited if he appeared anxious to procure her dismissal.

For he must give some reason for such a wish, some good, solid reason, and unless he told the truth—which was, of course, altogether out of the question—there was really none that he could give.

Young though she was and beautiful, there was no love left for Nellie in Neville Delamere's breast, all of affection that his selfish mind was capable of feeling was given to another, and that other the woman who had found her way in such strange guise to Milverstone.

Nellie was too good for him, heartless schemer that he was, and even her confiding little soul would have felt nothing but contempt for him could she have looked into his deceitful heart. Her winning innocence and strong sense of right palled upon him, and he would rather have taken the worldly, intriguing woman who had wormed her way into Milverstone as Esther Mor-

ton than its sunny-haired and sunny-hearted mistress, had not the money stood in the way.

CHAPTER XV.

"WHAT IN MY LIFE IS PLEASANT?"

To wear the badge of servitude, to know
No freedom—not e'en that of thought or mind—
'Twould be unbearable, but that I see
The time before me, close at hand, when I
Shall be revenged.

ALTHOUGH Milverstone Grange in its general habits did not ape the ways of mansions of the highest class, in one particular respect the servants there were bound. A uniform dress was insisted on as an essential clause in their engagement. This rule had been observed in the house for many years, for long, indeed, before Nellie had assumed the reins of government. But she enforced it most strictly after she became mistress. Whoever refused to submit to such restriction of their individual taste might go, but there were not many found to object to it, and those only vain, silly girls who considered such a mark of inferiority degrading.

In itself the dress was simple and pretty enough. A plain black gown, white cap and apron, and that only in the house. For holiday wear anything was permitted in the shape of colours and adornment that fancy might dictate, so long as neatness was observed.

"But there must be no apeing of fashions," Nellie told her housekeeper, very decidedly. "I wish to see my servants dress as becomes their station—not to look like dressmakers' blocks."

"I will let them know your wishes," Mrs. Deacon asserted, respectfully, "though I'm afraid they'll go their own way when they're out of sight. Girls nowadays are so fond of a bit of finery, you see."

But Nellie was determined, and guided by the perfect, ladylike taste of their young mistress, the servants of Milverstone Grange were a pattern to every household for miles round.

"I wish I knew how to manage mine as easily," sighed Mrs. Deacon one morning, when the subject of the wickedness of servants in general, and those of her own modest establishment in particular, was very present to her mind. "Such a lot as you've got to look after, and I with so few. But I'm sure I've the most trouble with mine. They go about like I don't know what. Why, only yesterday our cook—and a very good cook she is too—but that has nothing to do with it, has it?"

"With what?" Nellie inquired, innocently. Her thoughts were far away, and she had lost the thread of Mrs. Deacon's discourse for the moment. That was nothing unusual, indeed, when listening to the good lady, the thread of whose conversation was very apt to get into a tangle, and sometimes to be missed altogether.

"With servants' dress, my dear," said Mrs. Deacon, a little stiffly, "I was telling you about my cook. What do you think I saw her in yesterday?"

"I really haven't any idea," said Nellie, smiling.

"The impudence of the woman," exclaimed Mrs. Deacon. "I assure you, my dear, she had got on the fac-simile of a new bonnet I had sent from London only last week. Mine is the very best plush, and hers is made of some poor, thin stuff, with jet ornaments, but a complete copy, for all that, though a caricature. I was so annoyed with the woman—she's old enough to know better—that it was as much as I could do to keep from calling out to her before the whole congregation."

Nellie laughed merrily at this.

"Ah! it's all very well for you to laugh, that haven't any such trials," said Mrs. Deacon, in an aggrieved tone. "It's the second time the thing has been done. I'm sure I might talk myself hoarse without being able to do as you do. All the effect it would have would be that I should be obliged to do without servants if I tried to take their fal-lals away from them."

"Not at all. You would soon get others to

obey you if you made up your mind to be mistress in your own house," said Nellie; but Mrs. Deacon shook her head disconsolately.

"Ah, my dear, it's all very well for you to talk," she replied. "You've a housekeeper to take all the worry off your shoulders. But, talking of servants and dress," she went on, "I see that person you have taken in Wilson's place wears the same as the rest."

"Certainly," said Nellie.

"But I thought you did not insist upon it in the case of your own maid?"

"No. It was Morton's own choice though," Nellie explained. "She did not wish to have any exception made in her favour, she said."

"Ah, but I don't think you would have found her quite so modest if the costume did not become her as it does," Mrs. Deacon remarked, pursing her lips and looking profoundly wise. "She's quite aware of the fact, and if I were you I would not allow her to wear it."

"That would be rather inconsistent, don't you think?" said Nellie, smiling.

"Not at all," answered Mrs. Deacon, "ladies' maids are generally exempted from such regulations."

And more to the same effect, but without making any impression upon Nellie, who presently contrived to turn the conversation into another channel, not being desirous of a lecture from the rector's wife, and this she saw would be forthcoming if they got upon the subject of Esther Morton, whom she had quite made up her mind to befriend, with all the more determination, perhaps, that everybody seemed to have taken an unreasonable dislike to her.

"Stuck up," "deceitful," "and conceited," were epithets freely applied to Esther Morton in the servants' hall, where she was no favourite, holding herself aloof as she did even from the women, and treating with cold contempt and indifference the attempts of the men to show her attention.

Esther went her way, however, unmoved, and took no heed of the sneers and ill-concealed dislike of her companions, so that in course of time she was left pretty much to herself, and was quite content that it should be so. To be isolated from her kind was no new experience in Esther's life, and the lack of fellowship and human sympathy was hardly felt by her, was indeed the more welcome in that it afforded her time to think over the past, to brood upon the wrongs and slights, most of them fancied, she had endured at her cousin's hands; and as she brooded her reflection grew to be more and more tinged with envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness. Her longing desire for revenge was intensified.

But how to attain her desire?

True, she was here, beneath the roof of Milverstone Grange. But in what a position! as a menial, wearing the distinctive badge of servitude, at the beck and call of her own cousin, the woman who had robbed her of what should have been hers, whose riches had won from her the love which belonged to her. But only for a time.

Surely, fertile as was her brain, resolved her purpose, it would go hard but she could devise some means to overthrow her enemy, and the revenge she contemplated would be sweet indeed if she could but compass it upon this haughty girl who had refused to help her in her hour of need.

Yes, she had only to wait patiently, and that day of triumph must come to her at last.

And when it did no one would be able to say that she was unfit to fill the place she sought to occupy. She liked to gaze upon herself in the glass sometimes, clad as she was in her simple dress of plain black, with no ornament save that which nature had given her in the coronal of rich brown hair brushed back in massy waves from beneath the becoming little cap she wore—no hideously ugly erection of stiff muslin, hiding the whole of her head and making its wearer look like an old woman, but a neat and tasteful head gear that was always fresh and served to show off to the greatest advantage the features beneath. And Esther Morton was quite aware, and triumphed in the knowledge, that even in that simple dress, des-

titute as it was of the least ornament, she looked a more imposing and more beautiful woman than her young mistress, and that clad in trailing silks and velvets trimmed with costly lace, and bedecked with jewels to set off her regal beauty, the difference would be still more marked.

Nor was she misled by vanity to estimate too highly her advantages. Miss Rivers's was perhaps the more loveable face of the two, but that of her unknown cousin was the more striking in its perfect regularity of outline. She had a stately presence too, a more dignified and self-possessed manner. In disposition too they were entirely opposed as light and dark. Happy in her own lot Nellie was above all things anxious to increase by every means in her power the sum of earthly happiness by adding to others' comfort and joy. Loving everything and everybody about her, ready and willing to share the joys or sorrows of others, she was miserable herself if anyone suffered from any cause within her power to remove, or at least alleviate.

Her sway was one of love and gentleness, indeed, and a very easy mode of government she found it. Had Vera ruled in her place Milverstone Grange would have been in every respect as well governed, but the hand which held the sceptre would have been clothed in steel, not velvet. Vera would have announced her will and looked to have it obeyed without a murmur or a single word of dissent, or woe to the one who dared dispute it.

Nellie caught a look of her attendant's one day in the glass as she stood behind the chair brushing her hair—a look that made her feel an odd kind of creeping sensation, so intense was its malignity. It passed away in a moment, however, and she thought she must have been mistaken. Morton, she thought, was not so much attending to the duties she was performing as dreaming away on her own account, a fact which any other mistress than the indulgent Miss Rivers would have discovered much sooner.

"Wherever are your thoughts, Morton?" she asked, a little sharply, for her. "Your face looks as if they were a hundred miles away from here."

"Then my face betrays me, I assure you, miss," replied the maid, bringing out the last word in a hesitating manner that had been noticed before by Nellie, and made her fancy sometimes that her new attendant was not quite so respectful as she should be. "My thoughts were close to this spot, I assure you."

"I don't think they were occupied with my hair, then," said Nellie.

"I am very sorry if I appeared inattentive," replied Morton, quietly, "perhaps I am a little bit awkward, and you are very kind to put up with my want of skill. I will do my best to be more careful."

"I think you are skilful enough," Nellie returned. She felt rather afraid—although she would have found it rather difficult to assign any reason, even to herself, for such a feeling—of this curious maid of hers, "very skilful indeed, since you have never, you say, undertaken such duties before."

"Never."

"Then it is all the more surprising that you perform them so well," said Nellie. "I was not finding fault. I should not have spoken, indeed, only you seemed so preoccupied, in such a reverie, and not a very pleasant one, judging from appearances."

"Mine are seldom pleasant thoughts, miss," said Esther Morton, with a sombre look.

"That is a sad remark for one so young as you to make," said Nellie, gently.

"Experience of its truth comes sooner to some than to others," rejoined Esther, moodily.

"I am sorry if it has been so in your case," said her mistress, kindly, "I hope at least that you are happy here."

"I should, of course, be so," replied the other, "but some people seem born to ill-fortune, I think I am one of them."

"I hope not, it must be very sad to have no friends, I know."

"You have so many."

"Not as many as you fancy, perhaps," said

Nellie, "everybody I know is kind to me, but how many real friends can I number amongst them? I ought not to say that though," she went on, with a little blush. "I, who have all the friends in one a woman wants. Why? what's the matter, Morton?"

"The matter, miss?"

"Yes, you pulled my hair so hard, and looked so vicious, just as if you would like to kill somebody; I hope it is not me?"

"Envious people are generally spiteful, and I am envious," was the enigmatical reply. "Yes, there are some in the world whom I should like to kill, but you are not one of them, Miss Rivers."

(To be Continued.)

SCIENCE.

ECONOMICAL PRODUCTION OF STEEL.—M. Aube has patented in France a method of converting iron into steel, and at the same time producing illuminating gas. Iron is placed in a retort with charcoal or coke as layers, and heated to 900 deg. C.; fatty matters are then injected, and as soon as decomposition has taken place a jet of dry steam is passed over the incandescent mass. The result is said to be that the iron is converted into steel, and carburated hydrogen is given off from the retort.

ANOTHER MECHANICAL MOTION.—A new mechanical motion has been invented by Ira G. Todd, which will be of use for sewing machine work, silk and other light machinery. The motion is a positive one, and is to drive the shafts at right angles with each other, any distance apart, without using bevel gears. The motion consists of a peculiar double eccentric, an ordinary pitman connecting on the stud of the crank arm of the lower shaft. The motion has long been sought for in mechanics, so that the noise of the bevel gears could be dispensed with.

A NEW TELEGRAPH MACHINE.—Mr. Royal E. House, the last of the original telegraphers of the Morse time thirty years ago, has, it is said, perfected a system by which from 250 to 300 words a minute can be transmitted, received and permanently recorded, and which is automatic. The first instrument employed is built on the general principle of the type-writing machine, but instead of printing characters cuts long slits of greater or less length in a strip of hard and stiff Manila paper, with pointed knives, which are raised alternately through the lower and upper edges of the paper. The length of the slit identifies the letter. The strip of paper is then placed in a machine connected with a battery, and moves quickly through it. Two constantly revolving wheels fall readily into the slits of the paper, and thereby make an electrical connection with a receiving instrument at another office, with a set of knives similar to those in which the original slit is placed. The knives in the second machine cut clips of a length corresponding to those in the original and can be read by an expert, although they can be printed in the fourth machine with such rapidity as to make handwriting comparatively tedious and useless. The messages record themselves, and the presence or absence of an operator at the receiving end is of no consequence. They can be sent with all the rapidity of which perfect mechanism is capable, and will, it is claimed, average 200 to 250 words per minute, or approximate 15,000 words per hour of constant work. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the system is that all messages can be sent to any particular station without being heard or repeated at any other. The "call" is so arranged in its automatic way that while the machinery is in movement in every office, the knife-like wheel only fills the call-slits on the tape in the office for which it is intended, giving an automatic reply, and the similarly moving wheels in every other office, failing to fit the slits, have no impression.



[A RECOVERY.]

THE MAID OF MUHLEN.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESCUE.

Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower,
safety.

WYCLIFFE paused and looked up. Else was motioning him back.

"Ah!" he thought, "if I had taken her advice before, I would never have stood where I am standing now, with death staring me in the face. This time I will heed her."

He waved his hand, therefore, in recognition. She answered, motioning him to go up the pass.

This he did, as long as she signalled him to do it, stopping when she directed him to go no farther.

She had evidently devised some plan for attempting to send him aid, and while he was sceptical as to the result, he yet felt an irresistible impulse to trust his life in her hands.

"What a precious idiot I have been," he said, "to place it in jeopardy for Louise Lanier—a woman who regards it as of less value than the merest bauble which my wealth might purchase for her."

When Else saw that Wycliffe comprehended her wish and would obey her directions she rapidly descended the cliff, followed by her dog.

In her hand she carried a coil of rope. But, when Lionel had joined her at the torrent's edge, she untwisted the coils from about her arm, and dexterously looped them around his neck, while the noble animal stood patiently watching her, a world of wistful questioning in his meek eyes.

This great-hearted Lionel had been the truest, most faithful and devoted companion that the motherless girl had ever known.

Through childhood and maidenhood she had held converse with him, as with a tried, familiar friend; he knew her words and ways, and would have given his life for hers.

Imminent then must be the peril, even of a fellow mortal, to tempt her to the sacrifice she was doubtless preparing to make.

Wycliffe understood her design as he saw her twisting the coils of rope about the animal's neck, and, intuitively, he comprehended, at least, a measure of the pain which it cost her to expose the dog to almost certain destruction.

At the last moment, however, she almost faltered, for Lionel, as if now conscious of what she was demanding of him, suddenly turned his head, and, uttering a low whine, pressed it lovingly against her bosom as she knelt beside him.

She flung her arms about his neck.

"Brave Lionel! True friend! Thou faithful one!" she cried. "If thou must perish, my Brave, die as the heroes die! Be thou no craven, to meet death shrinking and afraid."

Hot, bitter tears dropped from her eyes and fell upon him. But there was only one instant of this weakness! Thrusting the dog from her embrace she bade him carry the rope across to Wycliffe, and the dauntless creature, courageous as a hero of Thermopylae, advanced at the word to the verge of the torrent.

The surging waters rushed over the delicate feet; the icy spray rained like needle points against his breast, and for an instant he shrank back and once more uttered that low, pleading whine, turning his mournful eyes, as if to ask if his mistress would possibly relent. Wycliffe could see that her face was fixed and white, that her bosom heaved, and that her eyes glimmered with tears; but she waved the dog on, nevertheless, and, pointing to the torrent, said: "Go! go! Or thou art no comrade of mine. Go, Lionel!"

As if ashamed by her taunt the dog gave a quick bark, rose lightly in the air, and sprang for-

ward, clearing the space to the first boulder. But over the next rock a treacherous sheet of spray was already creeping; and beyond for two yards or more a rush of breakers foamed and roared as if a whirlpool had suddenly opened there. The dog shivered perceptibly, gave a frightened whine that deepened to a growl and directly changed to a quick, alarmed bark. Yielding to a uncontrollable impulse of terror, he whirled swiftly around and bounded back to the bank. There after a moment he crept crouching and abashed to the feet of his mistress.

"Lionel," she cried, sternly, "I deemed thee faithful unto death. Hast thy false flesh turned traitor to the spirit that is within thee? My Brave, come!"

She tapped her shoulders and with a ringing bark he leaped up, planting his fore feet against her on either side of the firm, white throat. Else drew closer to hers the sleek head, and, laying her cheek softly against his, she murmured words of tenderness and pride.

Wycliffe watched the significant pantomime, and thought for a moment that she too had given up in despair the attempt to rescue him. "But no," he cried, suddenly. "I wrong her. Gracious Heaven, is the girl mad? Oh! that I had a thousand lives to give for hers."

For Else Von Boeck had leaped to the boulder from which Lionel had retreated; and the dog, incited by her example, had followed without hesitation. She patted him encouragingly; then, with another light bound, cleared the intervening distance to the next boulder, over which the waters, as we have said, were already foaming.

Pausing only long enough to see that Lionel still followed, and to calculate the distance to the third boulder, which was even yet more deeply submerged, she sprang fearlessly across.

For an instant her form swayed dangerously as if she would lose her foothold; but her strength and agility prevailed, and she stood there, firm as a rock, the white torrent sweeping high over her ankles.

Simultaneously the dog leaped with her, his cold muzzle kissing her hand as she balanced herself. She stooped and caressed him; and Wycliffe could hear her voice ring out clear and commanding as she spoke.

"Brave Lionel," she cried. "Brave boy. Hie thee now! Go—on! on!"

Had the dog disobeyed, or perchance even hesitated, both he and his mistress must have been swept off; but inspired by her bravery, or instinctively recognising that his sole chance of safety was in going forward, he leaped to the next rock, which, although submerged, yet gave him footing for a second, and then bounded to the next, which fortunately rose higher out of the stream, and yielded to him an instant's rest.

From there, after a slight breathing spell, encouraged by the voice of Else, he dashed onward again, and a few agile leaps carried him quite across, where, shaking the drops from his silken coat, he sprang upon the ledge at Wycliffe's side, licked the latter's hand, and looked back, as if for the approval of his mistress.

Wycliffe, before he even lifted off the heavy coils of rope, stooped, and passing his arm about Lionel's neck, pressed his lips to the spot which had been honoured by Else's last caress.

The girl had, meantime, left her perilous position, regained the security of the hither cliff, and had turned to look at Wycliffe.

A hot wave of colour as she saw this kiss dyed her cheek, throat, and even forehead.

Wycliffe now hastily uncoiled the rope from about the dog's neck, and Else, seeing that he understood her design, began rapidly to ascend the cliff.

To the other end of the rope a line of strong twine had been attached, and one of these lines she carried in her hand, while the other end, attached to a rope, had been conveyed to Wycliffe.

As she ascended the path she drew on the rope, while Wycliffe held it taut from his side.

Before she began to haul over the rope, however, she had summoned Lionel to return to her, with a shrill whistle, made partly by the fingers, after the order of an Alpine call.

The dog, pricking up his ears, had answered with a short bark; and bounding from the ledge had begun to recross the torrent.

He leaped with daring adroitness and seemed at first as if he would safely gain the side of his mistress.

Perchance, however, he was too eager or too careless, or, perchance, the waters had gained new depth and force; by some misadventure, at least, his feet were suddenly swept from under him and in an instant the maelstrom of waters seized him, whirling the graceful, slender body down the gorge, as helpless as a leaf that is borne before the gale.

Else covered her eyes hastily with her hands, and bent low her head, as if to shut out the horrible vision.

"Great Heaven!" cried Wycliffe, "if I could but have saved the dog, if only to spare her pain. She would as freely give her own life if it would avail to save another's, however. Heaven bless her."

But Else's weakness lasted only for a moment.

She looked up bravely the next instant and signalled Wycliffe to let out his coils of rope. Carefully he obeyed her injunction.

As carefully she wound in the twine, the end of the rope following after.

In a little while she was able to seize the rope itself and secure it tightly about a projecting crag, several feet above the flood, so as to allow for the sagging of the rope and the force of the torrent.

Wycliffe, catching at her idea, imitated her movements, and very soon a substantial line of support was established between the opposite banks.

Obedying her further instructions he formed an additional support for himself with a fragment of the rope, which he first securely fastened in a slip noose around his chest, passing the

other end over the rope and fastening it about his arm.

He took this precaution so that if his feet were swept from under him, as Lionel's had been, or his hands were jerked loose, he would yet be upheld and enabled to regain his position.

In this wise Wycliffe dared his fate once more.

But before he stepped into the torrent he turned, for an instant, in the direction of Else Von Boeck, and, lifting his hat, stood reverently uncovered, as if offering her thanks and invoking her prayers.

She beckoned him, in reply, to make the crossing without delay.

But he waited for yet one moment more. It was to thrust his hand into an inner pocket and draw forth the bunch of Alpine flowers, already bruised and withered, which he now held up for her to see.

Then, bending forward and extending his hand over the stream, he dropped the blossoms one by one into the flood.

The wind scattered the fragrant shower afar; then the whirlpools swallowed them up, and so perished every emblem of Wycliffe's fealty to Louise Lamer.

Else, meantime, by signs and words and outstretched hands, implored him not to lose another moment, for the flood was deepening continually, and already the shelf of rock on which he stood was under water, and every boulder of the crossing was likewise submerged. Thus urged he plunged in at last.

The crossing was a protracted struggle, as it were, with death.

Again and again Wycliffe's feet were swept from under him.

He only recovered his balance by clinging to the rope, and so struggling back to an upright position.

Again and again he was suspended over the torrent, his frail support alone holding him back from inevitable destruction.

White as a corpse, tensely still, Else Von Boeck watched the struggle. She could do no more for him, she felt, than she had already done.

Her breath came and went convulsively as she saw him leap from boulder to boulder, sometimes making good his foothold, sometimes, as we have said, missing it.

At last the worst of the passage was safely cleared.

But two more leaps and the danger would be past.

Another leap was safely taken. Thank Heaven, he was now almost within reach of her outstretched hand.

She did not dare to speak to him yet. She was afraid to attract his attention lest he should miss the next and last boulder.

Over this an eddying current of water rushed violently.

"Heaven help him!" she cried, involuntarily, clasping her hands in an attitude of prayer.

He sprang as she spoke and reached the boulder. But, as he feared, he slipped from the edge, and his whole weight falling with a jerk on the rope—it snapped in two.

Wycliffe was swept into the torrent and dashed against the bank, but, fortunately, still held fast to a fragment of the rope. More fortunately still, the other end of this fragment was in Else's hand.

She did not lose her presence of mind. Not a moment was to be lost. Exerting all her strength she pulled steadily on the rope, and so was able to draw him to land in spite of the mad whirl of the cataract.

She had to exercise great care to guard him from being dashed against the sharp rocks that jutted out along the bank. As it was, he was buffeted and tossed about until she feared life would be extinct before she could succeed.

At last, when everything else failed, she descended into the stream herself, venturing farther and farther, until finally she was able to take hold of the now unconscious Wycliffe.

But as she did this her over-strained strength

gave way, and she felt herself losing her own footing.

The cliffs seemed to be whirling wildly around her as in some mad dance, the roar of the surging waters was already in her ears, she realised that all was over both for her and for Wycliffe.

But at that instant a strong arm was suddenly thrown about her, and she was borne with her inanimate burden to the shore. Leonard Westcott had received and read the note she had left for him, and had hastened with others from the hotel to the rescue.

They had reached the torrent just in time, as we have seen, to save Else and Wycliffe. A second more and they would have been too late.

CHAPTER V.

CONVALESCENCE.

Fortune, good night; smile once more; turn thy wheel.

THREE or four weeks subsequently the scene of this exploit was totally metamorphosed.

The roar and the rush were stilled, the tumult of waters was hushed into silence, and snow wreaths lurked in every crevice, where maelstroms had whirled and whirled.

The Alpine winter had locked everything in its frozen grasp. Over cascade and cliff an icy stillness reigned. Every peak glistened white in the steel-blue air. The cold without was intense. Fierce storms shook even the solid base of the Mühlen Hotel. But within all was cheery. A genial and soothing warmth pervaded every apartment, a warmth emanating from the huge preheated stove of Frau Schnellwind.

It was a new world, indeed, into which Wycliffe's returning consciousness had inducted him—a world made up, perhaps, of brighter fancies and purer realisations than he had happened upon ever before.

For many days following his adventure the fancies that visited him were, it is true, those of a fevered brain; and with the life-blood rioting in his veins it was many days more before he could draw for himself the boundary line between the realm of imaginative bliss or woe and the pleasant realisations that came to him in the first hours of convalescence.

During these days of recovery Leonard Westcott had been his untiring attendant, forsaking pleasure, business, everything, to linger at Mühlen, ministering to his comrade's helplessness. The Frau Schnellwind had been his coadjutor in this, so that both he and Wycliffe looked upon her as a fat, smiling angel of mercy, entering the sick room always with her hands full of blessings in the form of soothing draughts or bodily refreshments.

To the invalid her broad, genial face and cheery German chatter brought also, in his hours of pain and depression, a needed stimulus to hope or patience.

Yet Wycliffe, ungrateful and exacting, longed for another presence. Often, in his first hours of illness, he had felt dimly conscious of the touch of fingers lighter and softer than either Leonard's or the Frau's; and more than once his half-delirious sense had been moved by what seemed the sweetest tones mortal had ever listened to.

But when the danger was over, when consciousness had fully returned, the cool, light fingers were felt no longer, the soft, musical voice heard no more.

Poor Leonard found it no easy matter, in consequence, to satisfy the invalid, who grew daily more exacting and irritable. Even when transferred to the state parlour, even when the Frau and her meek spouse came and went with kindly ministrations and voluble expressions of interest, it was but little better, for Else Von Boeck had returned to the monastery and only appeared at rare intervals when the storms would permit. On these occasions she would, however, brighten the invalid's room long enough to make kindly inquiries regarding Wycliffe's physical welfare.

With these brief glimpses of her he tried to be content, and her coming was something to look forward to from day to day. But at last a time arrived when he saw her no longer. A protracted storm had been raging over Mühlen for a week or more, and in that interval Else had not been to the hotel a single time. Wycliffe, in consequence, had reached that point at which he thought patience had ceased to be a virtue.

"This is an intolerable bore, Leonard."

"What is?" retorted his friend.

For three or four hours the invalid had had nothing to do but stare out of the peaked casement at the fast-falling snow.

"What is it? Why everything—the snow—the solitude—these aching bones—the intolerable dullness. It's enough to drive a sick man to distraction. I wish something would turn up."

"What, the thunder, old fellow, could 'turn up' at this altitude? The attraction of gravitation is too strong. So, perforce, the rain, the snow, the sleet and the hail must fall, and one's spirits will sink to zero in unison. The roads are blocked, so that the diligence can no longer 'turn up' the Julier Pass, nor consequently 'turn up' the quietude of our hotel. Indeed, I know of nothing at this elevation to 'turn up,' unless it be Frau Schnellwind's flap jacks; and surely they 'turn up' brown and luscious enough to tempt the appetite of a Sybarite. The Frau is going to give us some for dinner. I saw her getting the irons ready when I was at the bake-house a few minutes ago. So cheer up, old fellow."

The "old fellow" smiled dolefully.

"It's very well for you to make light of the Mühlen forlornness," he growled, "but you are not tied to this chair and to this dull barn of a room as I am. You have your recreations."

"What recreations for instance?" dryly.

"Well, those hunts you enjoy with the Frau's nephew."

"You mean those two scrambles over the ice-fields, in which Fritz and I saw not even the shadow of a chamois; and in both of which I had my toes and ears frosted, in addition to a tumble into a miniature crevasse. Well, if they were recreations, what next?"

"The walks to the monastery."

"Three times, with Fraulein Else, you mean. Well, those would come under the head of recreations, only the girl wears clogs sometimes. You think her pretty? Ah, you should have seen her the first time I did. It was when I was here before, as I have told you already. She little imagined that any strangers were near, and was sitting on the hearth-stone of the out-kitchen feeding the pigeons. The birds seemed to regard her as one of themselves, and came cooing and whirling about her, eating from her hand. Her hair was unbound and fell in its golden lustre quite to her waist. Her feet were bare, for the day was warm, and she had, apparently, flung aside her shoes for the moment; and such feet, my dear fellow, such lovely little feet I never saw before and shall never see again."

"You forget," said Wycliffe, stiffly, "that you are speaking of one who saved my life."

"Oh! I meant no harm. The very reverse indeed. But there's no denying that these German Mädchen wear a rough, uncouth garb, sometimes at least, as compared with our English girls."

"It's the most picturesque, the most beautiful costume, I think, in the world."

"You think so. Well, there's no accounting for taste. Just imagine, will you, the effect of such a tout ensemble as the Maid of Mühlen on the occasion I have described in the reception-room of La Belle Rivière."

"She would adorn a palace in any garb. I was a fool that day, Leonard."

"You are a fool now, Wycliffe."

The colour deepened in Wycliffe's face.

"You are a monstrous fool, I think, to let a sentiment of pride stand between you and your choice of a woman like Else Von Boeck."

"Pride! It would be the proudest day of my

life in which I could gain her assurance that she would be my wife."

Leonard nodded.

"I thought as much. Why not go in and win then?"

Wycliffe sighed dolorously.

"It's no use. She doesn't care an iota for me. She risked her life for me, but she would have done so for her bitterest foe. Her heart is full of kindness to all, but she has no love for me."

"Nonsense! She nursed you night and day without rest or sleep while you were so ill."

"So she would have nursed a beggar. No, Leonard, if she cares for anybody it is for you, my boy. I've watched her eye brighten when you were talking with her. Besides, am I blind? Don't I see how you haunt the bake-room when she and the Frau are busy there?"

Leonard laughed.

"So that's the way the wind sets? You mean when the Fraulein is there preparing with her own hands some dainty to tempt your palate?"

Wycliffe stirred uneasily.

"There is more talking than baking done, I suspect."

Again Leonard laughed gaily.

"There's truth in that suspicion certainly, and I tell you what, Wycliffe, there's a wonderful fascination about the Maid of Mühlen, whether she talks or is silent. But there's nothing like the charm she has over the bake-oven when laughing and chatting; her cheeks glow, her eyes sparkle; oh! I wish you could see her so."

"I wish I could," and Wycliffe pushed back his chair, petulantly. "But here I am bound, like Tantalus, and I may hunger and thirst, perpetually, with no one to care about it."

"While I can drink from the wells of brightness in her eyes and reach forth to pluck the fruit which so tempts you, eh, Wycliffe? No, seriously, old fellow, the Maid of Mühlen is sour grapes to me, in spite of her sweetness. I cannot reach her. She's quite beyond me; but you have a chance if you did but know it. At least I think so," gravely. "Indeed I do. It's worth your trying, at least. God bless you both. You were made for each other if ever two people were."

Wycliffe did not answer, but sat thinking. Meantime, Leonard applied himself vigorously to polishing the gun he was cleaning, preparatory to another "recreation" with Fritz, to see if he could get a bit of game for the invalid. At last he looked up and remarked, as if inspired by a sudden idea:

"I say, Wycliffe? Speaking of those talks in the bake-room. That's a jolly place, if ever there was one. For my part I can't see why you should be mewed in this stupid parlour, big and grand as it is, when our Frau is twice as fat and twice as jolly in the bake-room. The Fraulein too is twice as beautiful and five times less dignified in there than here. I've a great notion to ask Frau Schnellwind if she will not let me wheel your chair into the bake-room, where you can sit in the corner by the ovens and be waited on and entertained like a prince."

For the first time Wycliffe showed some animation.

"Do, my dear boy! There's nothing I would like better."

Leonard laid aside his gun.

"I'll go at once to the Frau. But it's not likely we'll have much of a 'lark' in there, to-day. The Fraulein will hardly come up through this snow storm."

In a short while he returned triumphant; and Wycliffe was soon established easily in the warmest corner of the coveted bake-room.

"I feel as if something had 'turned up' for me at last, Leonard," he said, smiling brightly, as he leaned back in his chair, content.

"May it be a trump card of destiny, Wyc," answered Leonard, cordially. "Heigh, ho! old fellow, look out there! The wheel of fortune is turning for you in spite of the weather."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SNUGGERY.

Epicurean cooks
Sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite.

WYCLIFFE's face lighted up with a flush of excitement as he caught sight, through the window, of the red hood and fur-lined cloak of the Fraulein Else.

Leonard hastened into the hall to welcome her, and a moment later he and she entered the bake-room together, talking merrily.

What a fair picture she made framed in the doorway, for as soon as she saw Wycliffe she paused on the threshold, the impersonation of pleased surprise.

"Mein Herr," she cried, advancing to greet him, with a frank shake of the hand. "I haf not seen you look before so like yourself. Is it only the firelight from the bake-ovens, or haf you a colour really? Which is it, Herr Westcott? See what a tint of health his cheeks wear to-day."

"It is not an evidence of incipient heart-disease," said Westcott, mischievously, "is it, Wyc? It has come so suddenly; for you had none of it over in the Frau's state parlour. I think, Fraulein, if it is not from the ovens it must be a reflection of your own radiant bloom."

She echoed his laugh, raising her pink palms to her cheeks, which were brilliant with colouring.

"The wind blows a hurricane along the monastery road and I haf walked briskly," she said. "If Herr Wycliffe borrows his colour from me I can spare him some more and haf no loss myself."

She turned again to the invalid.

"It iss the air of the bakery that hass done you so good. How strange you haf nefer before discovered this cheeriest nook of the whole house."

"I did not think I should be admitted."

"Ach! Herr Westcott, why did you tell him not that we haf no mysteries here?"

"To confess the truth, Fraulein, I was selfish enough to forget that Wycliffe might be yearning for these domestic delights which have been such a pleasure to me, but which I really thought were foreign to his taste. It was but an hour or two ago when the idea of bringing him here first popped into my head; and, presto, there he was twenty per cent. better for the change at once."

"Of course, and the fery sight of Frau Schnellwind's ceaseless activity, to say nothing of the odorous delights of our bakery, will be the fery best tonic he could haf," she said, smiling.

"Then you and Frau Schnellwind will not be hard-hearted enough to remand me to the isolation of the state parlour?" said Wycliffe.

"Nay, Herr Wycliffe, you shall be fery welcome to stay. You haf my permission. And as for the Frau Mutter, her heart is as large as her body; so there iss but small danger of being exiled by her. But here she comes to speak for herself."

Meantime our convalescent leaned back in his easy chair, smiling contentedly, while the Frau Mutter expressed volubly to Else her disapprobation of the exposure she had undergone in braving the drifts and snowfall along the road from the monastery.

Else rejoined blithely, but threatened to turn back home at once if the Frau Mutter would have none of her.

Against this proposition Leonard and the dame protested vehemently, and Lisabet, slow and meek-eyed as one of her Alpine cows, said:

"The Fraulein must not go, for the house has been in shadow until she came."

But Wycliffe said nothing. Only when Frau Schnellwind had with her own hands, the better to show her welcome, dismantled their visitor of her snow-wreathed wrappings, and had hung the white brodered hood and cloak by the fire close to him he reached out his thin fingers, smoothing caressingly the soft fur that had sheltered Else from the cold and wet.

"Frau Schnellwind was right; don't you

think so?" he said, presently, when Else came up to dry and warm herself. "It was quite dangerous for you to come out in such weather. But now that you are here it will yet prove dangerous for you to attempt to go back until the snow is over. Frau Schnellwind should require you to remain for the night."

Else smiled.

"It will hardly be necessary for die Frau Mutter to lay heavy commands upon me, I think," she answered, brightly. "I came expecting to remain this night. Indeed, my uncle, the prior, is absent on one of his missions, and I have his permission to tarry here for his coming, and it must be several days that I am here."

Not a rift had been made in the clouds, hovering low about Mühlen, yet to Wycliffe her news was as if a burst of sunshine had been let into Frau Schnellwind's bakery.

"Your uncle, the kind old prior, has lived a life of good works they tell me, Fraulein," he said, looking at her. "But surely his departure at this time is the most beneficent deed of charity he could have performed."

She flushed slightly, her clear gaze faltering a little at meeting the glad light in his eyes.

"His going now was opportune for me at least, as it enables me to pay a visit to die liebe Frau before my own departure from Mühlen."

"Your departure?" he echoed, dolefully. "Surely you are not going to leave the monastery?"

"Yes. I have to go when the way is clear—when the snow is gone a little, I mean. My father summons me to the care of his house, now that I have come to dignity and age enough to have a charge so grand."

She smiled. But it was with difficulty Wycliffe could summon a smile in answer. The rift in the clouds, if there had been one, had closed again; and the sunshine was gone, leaving only a blank shadow behind.

Both were silent for a while. At length Wycliffe resumed the conversation. He seemed anxious to learn all he could of Else's family, and of her future home life, and ventured to question her about them. She told him briefly how her mother had died almost before her recollection. Her father, a general in the German army, had never married again; and so the children had never been scattered. She had one brother and two sisters.

"I have told Herr Westcott of my sister, Thekla," she said, smiling. "She is petite-fairy-like. She is very loffy, and I know her beauty should please even his artistic taste for the beautiful."

"Doubtless Leonard would find Fraulein Thekla lovely as you say. But don't you think my friend's æsthetic sense inclines rather to the statuesque or stately? Is not the elder sister rather the model for his artistic taste?"

Else laughed in her bright, artless way.

"I?" spreading out her hands. "Why, Mein Herr, your friend looks at me to be the soul of practicality. With all his cleverness he could transfer me not efer to his canvas, idealised, etherealised as he would paint Thekla there. By-the-bye, he has, the Herr Westcott has promised that he shall come this winter to Berlin to make a portrait of my sister Thekla, I hope he may induce you to honour us also, Herr Wycliffe. My father will gif you both a welcome."

"Thanks," said Wycliffe, speaking constrainedly, almost coldly. "That will be impossible, I fear, as business will call me to England as soon as I can shake off these miserable shackles binding me here."

"You mean those splints and bandages," she said, quietly. "They must gif harassment to one who desires to haf motion."

Never a repetition of her invitation. Not even a word of regret for his proposed return across the sea.

Again a silence fell between them, and this time neither of them attempted to bridge it over with a word.

Presently Else got up from warming her chilled hands and feet, and went to answer the summons of Westcott, who had already twice warned her that Frau Schnellwind was ready

for the meringue pastries they were to compound.

Else found the twain at the pastry slab, at the far side of the bakery.

The dame was busily whisking her eggs, and her artist guest with privileged familiarity was leaning his elbows on her slab, while together they were hotly discussing the relative merits of their respective mother tongues.

Else went to work assisting the dame. But though she listened smilingly to Westcott's chatter and the Frau's guttural retorts she did not join in the debate.

Across by the stove Wycliffe sat silent if not sullen.

Indeed for a time he would not look at or listen to the trio at the pastry table. His eyes, on the contrary, were fixed on the fire as if he was studying out problems which seemed to rise with the flames that leaped and cracked there.

By-and-bye he rested his head against the cushion and, closing his eyes, shut out even a chance vision of the other occupants of the bakery.

Frau Schnellwind, deceived by his well-feigned slumber, signalled Westcott to cease his chatter and Lisabet to stop her clatter among the pots and pans.

Else looked once at the listless figure and at the emaciated face, but she glanced away immediately and went on with her meringues.

Westcott after awhile, tired of the monotonous silence, had recourse to his never-failing comforter, his cigarette case.

Lighting one of the fragrant twists at the fire, he strolled from the bakery to seek the worthy host in the latter's snugery, where they had had many a smoke and chat together.

CHAPTER VII.

A DISCOVERY AND A DECLARATION.

Upon thy cheek I lay this zealous kiss
As seal to the indurance of my love.

Soon after Frau Schnellwind was summoned by some domestic call to another part of the hotel, and Wycliffe, furtively opening his eyes, discovered that he and the Fraulein and the busy Lisabet were the sole occupants of the room.

For some time he watched secretly the deft fingers and graceful movements of Else, while her shapely hands patted and kneaded and rolled the flaky crusts destined for the oven.

More than once already the oven door had been opened softly, and Lisabet had deposited within a few of the tempting meringues; but at such moments Wycliffe snapped his eyes promptly together, hypocrite as he was, so that Lisabet and the Fraulein were alike unconscious of the deception he was practising upon them.

Consequently the two worked on without speaking, until Lisabet noticed the Fraulein's sleeve dipping into the meringue mixture.

At this she moved quickly to Else's side, and began to tuck up the obtrusive cuffs from the round, white arm. This was what Wycliffe wanted.

He had wondered why Else did not bare her arms at work as she had done the first day he saw her. How fair and rounded they had looked to him even then! Much to his chagrin now he saw her resist Lisabet.

"Nay, nay, Lisabet," she said. "Let the sleeve be. It incommodes me but little. I purposely left it down that he might not see this arm to-day."

She nodded towards Wycliffe.

"Why can't she permit me," he said to himself, "to see her arm bared? She bares it when working before Leonard."

"But, Fraulein," persisted Lisabet, "he sleeps, and the sleeve is being messed. You are quite safe in permitting me to loop back the sleeve, for the pastries will be done directly, and he may sleep there for an hour or more."

"You are as self-willed as usual, Lisabet," answered the Fraulein, with a smile. "To content you, the sleeves shall be rolled up, though

you can see for yourself how plain the scar is to-day."

"A scar," repeated Wycliffe, and looking stealthily he saw a broad, purple cicatrice, barely healed over, on the arm which Westcott had pronounced a model of symmetrical beauty, and which had been stretched forth for his salvation that horrible day in the gorge.

What a sickening sensation of remorse overwhelmed him.

This, then, was the "little hurt," which had made a sling necessary for her, as he dimly remembered in those first, fevered days succeeding the catastrophe.

It was well Lisabet recommenced her whispering, for otherwise he must have made an effort to rise and go to Else.

"Does the arm pain you to-day, liebe Fraulein?" said Lisabet, passing her fingers tenderly across the wound.

"Yes. Rather more to-day than usual. You know the dampness causes the bone to ache at times."

"Do not those arnica bands relieve the pain somewhat?"

"Yes, they are quite soothing."

"Then you shall have some of the bandages to put on at once. I will fetch the arnica bottle from the south closet. Look to the meringues in the stove, Fraulein. I will be back as soon as I have rummaged Frau Schnellwind's medicine chest and linen bag."

And kind-hearted and thoughtful of the Fraulein's comfort Lisabet tripped away before Else could object.

But scarcely had the door closed behind her when Else was startled by a noise in the direction of Wycliffe.

His sudden start at hearing Lisabet's words had dislodged his cushions and sent them, and his crutch with them, whirling out upon the shining floor of the bakery.

Else sprang to his side to repair, as she thought, the damage done by Lisabet's clumsiness.

"Mein Herr," she said, soothingly, "I have fear Lisabet's noise has startled you greatly. The Madchen is healthy, and has never discovered her own nerves, but her heart is a good one, and she is a faithful creature."

"She is a noble girl," cried Wycliffe, impetuously. "She is better, far better than I, Fraulein; for she gives you a faithful, unselfish devotion, while I have been niggardly, selfish and exacting in the very gratitude I have felt to you in receiving as I did the gift of my life from your hands."

"Mein Herr," cried Else, unaffectedly, "you speak enigmas to me. I needed not that you should have gratitude for the exercise of a natural impulse on my part."

She looked so proud, so cold as she said these words, standing before him, her arms tightly folded around the cushion she had lifted from the floor.

The cruel scar on her arm meantime showed vividly against the white, smooth flesh.

"Yet in following your natural impulse, Fraulein, you endured this for me?"

He touched just for an instant the purple edge of the scar. A crimson glow suffused the Saxon fairness of her face, and she made an effort to draw the sleeve down over the arm.

But Lisabet had secured the loops, and the fastening would not yield.

"Do not cover it, Fraulein," he pleaded. "Do you know I did not dream until now that you had been injured on that horrible evening—that is beyond a slight bruise or two? Great Heaven! if I had imagined you would risk—"

"It is nothing, Mein Herr—a mere scratch. The briefest time must erase every trace of it."

She was nervously trying to replace the cushion at the back of his chair, rather to withdraw her arm from his observation than to afford him a support, for he had raised himself upon his crutches, and was now standing close beside her—so close indeed that she could feel his quick breath on her forehead.

Suddenly he bent closer, and took in his own the nervous fingers so busy about his cushions.

"Tell me, Fraulein—Else," he said, gently,

"Thank Heaven, there is no chasm or torrent, nor I trust any other height or depth to separate us; but if there were, Else dear—if that awful danger were to be passed through by us again—would it be solely a natural impulse which would lead you to risk your own life for the salvation of mine? Would there be no stronger motive impelling you to brave this again for me?"

As he spoke he touched the scar reverently.

She lifted her face bravely.

"I would assuredly risk my life for you now, or in the future, Mein Herr," she answered, "if you were in danger, as you were that day."

"But for love's own sake, Elae?—would you do it for love's sake? Oh, Fraulein," he pleaded, as her eyes sank abashed under the passion of his, "what will be to me the worth of the life you have given back into my keeping if you crown it not with the only true happiness of living? Do you not know," holding tightly between both of his tremulous fingers he had captured, "dost thou not know, Liebchen," dropping into the soft, sweet wooing of the German, "how I have loved thee, a heart full, since that moment when I gave those fatal flowers to the tide to be fed to the fishes of the sea rather than that any other save thee should wear them on her heart. I loved thee, thee only, in that moment, Elae—"

She lifted her eyes again to meet his.

"And I—"

She began bravely. Then she paused, consciously shy.

"And thou—go on, dear—and thou—"

"I—I too loved thee in that moment, Mein Herr."

He bent quickly forward and pressed his lips on the scar reverently.

"Perchance, dear Elae," he said, "it was not then solely an impulse that prompted thee to risk so much for me?"

"No."

The answer came very softly, very shyly.

He drew her closer to him.

"Was it for love's dear sake, then, that thou didst brave this wound for me, my Elae?"

"For love's dear sake," she repeated, as if questioning her own heart. "Yes, Mein Herr, it was for love's dear sake."

A few minutes later Lisabet re-entered the bakery tumultuously as she had quitted it.

"Such a time as I have had, Fraulein," she cried, "finding that bottle of arnica, for Dame Schnellwind had moved it to the cupboard where the empty bottles stand. But there's enough yet to ease your pain."

"Give the arnica to me, good Lisabet. I will prepare the bandages for Fraulein Elae's arm," said Wycliffe.

He spoke quietly, but with a degree of authoritative kindness, to which Lisabet yielded after a glance at the acquiescent face of the Fraulein.

Indeed, the Madchen's present care was more for the meringues she had left baking in the stove than for anything beside. She sniffed the air suspiciously.

"It seems to me something's scorching," she said. "Did you look to the pastries, Fraulein?"

"No, Lisabet. It has been but a short while since they were put to bake."

"A short while? Pat! A good hour, at least. Donner und Blitzen! What will Frau Schnellwind say? They are ruined, I know."

She peered anxiously as she spoke into the smoking, cavernous blackness of the bake-oven.

"Ein Tausend Teufel!" she cried. "They are charred to a cinder. Fraulein Von Boeck, the meringues are—"

"Cremated," finished Leonard Westcott, peeping curiously over Lisabet's shoulders at the black ashes smoking in the pans.

He turned to look at Wycliffe and his blushing companion, then sought to comfort the sorrowing Lisabet.

"Never mind the meringues, Lisabet," he said, divining all at a glance. "It seems these children have been frying other fish for their delectation, and they will not be hungry for a month of Sundays."

Lisabet looked puzzled, but discreetly set to work to remove the ashes preparatory to a fresh relay of the meringues, for doubtless she and Frau Schnellwind would never again see the like of those pastries in the bakery where Wycliffe had wooed and won his MAID OF MUHLEN.

THE END.

WHAT IS WEIGHT?

A SCHOOLBOY is often puzzled to account for the fact that people on the other side of the earth, with their feet pointing towards ours, do not fall off, and he never fully understands how this cannot happen until he realises that the earth pulls everything towards it whatever it may be. In virtue of the earth's pull a weight falls downward from a height with an ever-increasing speed, and a pendulum swings to and fro until its excursions have become so shortened by friction and the resistance of the atmosphere that it stops. We usually speak of the force with which the earth pulls a thing towards it as the weight of that thing, and when, in the common operation of weighing goods, we place them in one pan of a pair of scales and in the other place certain standards (which we speak of as hundredweights or pounds) until the earth's pull on the goods is just balanced by the earth's pull on the standard weights, then we may say they have both the same weight, and we measure the weight of the goods by the standards we have employed.

Suppose now we were to employ for weighing instead of the usual pair of scales a spring balance in which we measure the weight of a thing by the extent it will stretch out a spring, and not by counterposing it with known standards, we should find a substance with such an instrument to be inconsistent with its weight; it would weigh less at the top of a mountain than it would down at the bottom of a valley. It is very evident that the quantity of matter in the substance would remain unaltered during its transit from the top to the bottom of the mountain, although its weight increased. The quantity of matter in a body is spoken of as its mass, a very short and convenient word. It will now be perceived that change of position alone will not alter the mass of an article, although it may very materially alter its weight or the force with which it is pulled towards a planet. Here is a fanciful example to the point: There goes a jolly fellow who weighs sixteen stone if he weighs a pound; in other words, the earth pulls at him with a force which would register sixteen stone if he were put into the pan of a very large spring balance. Suppose him now, if it were possible, instantly transported to the surface, let us say of Jupiter. His mass would be unaltered, but upon sitting once more in the pan of the spring balance he would weigh only nine and three-tenths pounds.

A REMARKABLE instance of longevity, which links in an interesting way the present century with the past, comes from America. Very recently the Court of Queen's Bench in Montreal was visited by M. Louis Lessard, who was born in Amiens, in France, in 1778, and served in the Grand Army under Napoleon. He was accompanied in the Court by his third wife, to whom he was married when he was within a few days of 100 years old.

MR. MACKONCHIE, on his recent return from America, met with a pleasant surprise. It may be remembered that the only result of the Ritualistic prosecution in his case was the sequestration for three years of his modest stipend of £150 per annum. His friends have raised enough money to pay him £250 a year for three years. Thus, after twelve years' litigation, the Church Association has lost £12,000, and Mr. Mackonochie has got a present of £300, besides winning the day and going on just as before any lawsuit was heard of.

ZILLAH THE GIPSY;

OR,

LOVE'S CAPTIVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Lady Violet's Victims," "Lord Jasper's Secret," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT THE WORLD SAID.

So all the world, and all in it I hate,
Because it changeth ever to and fro.

THE duke scarcely knew what to believe, as the grim plot unfolded itself. At present, however, there was a decided lull in the suspension of hostilities, for evidence had to be hunted up, and the lawsuit was too fine an affair, affording too many opportunities for piling on expenses, for either side to care to hurry matters on too rapidly.

The duke left Madeline more than ever perplexed as to the situation of matters, and went straight to his lawyers the following morning.

"I feared this information might involve very unpleasant exposures," the lawyer said, turning over a pile of letters. "We have long heard very singular reports, but now a direct claim is made on the property by a girl calling herself Prince Anatole's daughter and heiress. She is at present singing under the name of Corelli."

"Corelli," repeated the duke, and then in one blinding flash the truth was revealed to him.

He sprang to his feet and stood erect, his hand striking the lawyer's desk. A deadly despair seized him. He thought of the proud, grand utterance—the matchless voice, the maddening beauty of the young artiste—she who had been so dear to him, the heroine of his romance of the woods—Zillah.

"Go on," he said, hoarsely, "tell me all."

"The girl, it seems, left the house, goaded to revolt by the cruelty of her aunt, Lady Alesia, and led a wandering life, half from choice and half from necessity. Her disappearance led eventually to the supposition of her supposed death. The prince then adopted his niece, and looked upon her in the light of a daughter. But here again the affair looks dark and involved in mystery, for we have seen witnesses who declare that the prince was induced to believe she was his child, and that Lady Alesia swore her daughter had died and was buried in England."

"But how can you prove that Zillah left her English home?"

"There is not the slightest doubt that the girl once lived at Rosendale Hall, a place in Devonshire, with her aunt and cousin. Her friends have employed detectives to trace out the past. A maid of Lady Alesia brought a desk, in which was found a note written by Zillah declaring her intention of leaving them for ever. Here it is."

He tossed Bertram a copy of Zillah's note, written in a round, childish hand, and his eyes grew dim and misty as he read it. Poor little misguided child, through what suffering must she have passed to have severed herself at one blow from her home, and, once in the power of the gipsies, she would be still more duped and deceived.

The lawyer was a shrewd, kindly man, and he was certainly astonished at finding his client so affected. Here was none of the indignant fury of a man whose wife might be disinherited of all, and who might find himself again a beggar. He did not understand it.

"You seem to take a rather singular view of the situation, duke," he said, glancing through his papers. "That note appears to affect you. You look as lovingly at it as if it were a billet-doux addressed to yourself."

"I will be candid with you, Clarke," he answered, rising to his feet. "When travelling

through Italy I passed an evening at the villa of Zaire Desrolles. On leaving, I was shot at and wounded. As I lay insensible in a ditch a gipsy girl, passing, found me, and gave the alarm. I was taken to the gipsies' tent and nursed there till I recovered. Who do you think that girl was?"

The lawyer pushed his spectacles over his brow, staring at the duke in amazed bewilderment. He was a man who confessed himself surprised at nothing, but for once in his life he felt completely taken aback—then again, was not truth stranger than fiction?

"Not Corelli?"

"Ay, Zillah the gipsy. She was beautiful and quite different from any girl I had ever met; she was an artist in feeling and sentiment to the core. Her life, all unknown to herself, was a silent martyrdom. She was a poet, with a grand, old-world grace about her that I could never understand, seeing she was but a gipsy, but in her veins ran noble blood, and she had all the high, stainless creeds of her ancestors."

"Great Heavens, it is marvellous."

The duke's face grew white as he proceeded, and his friend watched him in pained surprise.

"I loved her, and she, an angel of innocence, learnt to love me too. She shrank from the low, brutal natures around her. I saw she had genius and Heaven-born gifts. I took her to Mathias."

"And in doing so sealed your own ruin. He has worked against you with consummate skill in Zillah's interests. He sent the female detective, Jane Harding, your wife's maid, to Clydale. She bribed Adrienne to tell her all she heard and knew. Together they watched and waited, every meeting with the gipsies, every letter. Every look and chance word has been noted and put down. They've got a very pretty weight of circumstantial evidence together, I can tell you."

How he shrank from recollection of the wife whose selfishness and wickedness had drawn him into the poisonous net. He remembered her guilty fears, her strange tremors, her vague assertions; link by link things returned to his memory little thought of before and bore evidence against her.

"I took Zillah to Mathias," he continued, "and he has made her, as you know, a great artiste. I loved her so desperately that I agreed to a marriage in the gipsies' tent to release her from her oath to them—all these nomads have strange ties and bonds. The ceremony was performed by this very Michael who now claims to be the heir."

"A very pleasant complication of affairs, indeed; if this is what romance leads one to I think the sooner—"

"Wait, my dear friend, and hear all. Michael acted thus out of revenge, urged on by his mother. I took Zillah to my hotel, meaning to be married in a Christian church the following day, and now you know what followed: the telegram from my mother, the duchess, begging me to return, ruin, despair, beggary. You know, you were there; we went into all the debts together."

"I remember I urged you to make a wealthy marriage, it was all that was left you."

"I went back to Italy, but I saw Zillah no more; she had been lured into a snare of the gipsies. They proved to me by a host of vile lies that she was false and worthless, gone away with a lover when she heard I was ruined, and I never set eyes on her again till the other night at the open-house when her mask fell and I recognised her as the Zillah of my past."

The lawyer was silent, and then, taking up a letter, he spread it open before the duke.

It was from Michael's solicitor, and it was here he pointed out where the real danger lay.

"He's got a very strong case, for if a marriage really took place between the prince and Thyra, as Lady Alesia pretends she believes he did, he is the sole legal heir. It's all very well his wishing to share the property with your wife, but there is such a thing as a man losing his reason under the first spell of riot, of wasting his possessions and clamouring for more, and he will be utterly insatiable in his demands since the law will perhaps award him all."

The duke had grown of late hardened and indifferent to many things; if the wheel of fortune sent him want and obscurity he should hardly care. His wealth had never brought him any real happiness, the only perfect days of his life had been passed with Zillah in the woods, when her eyes yielded him child-like worship and her grace and genius had charmed him as nothing had ever charmed before.

"One must be a philosopher in the present state of affairs," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "and meanwhile we must wait and see the game played out. On one side stands a claimant calling herself Prince Anatole's only daughter and heiress, on the other a man declaring himself his sole legitimate heir willing to divide his possessions with my wife. It's a curiously tangled web, but what the result will be remains to be proved."

After more conversation the duke took his leave, bewildered at the turn of events. All his best thoughts and dreams had been evoked by his love for Zillah, she lifted him from earth, he found her the only pure and perfect soul he had ever met. And whether or no the prince had deceived the Arabian lady Selika, Zillah was undoubtedly his daughter, none now disputed that. She was of noble birth, and she might be incontestably proved the real heiress.

After leaving his lawyer's office he lounged into his club, where he heard the echo of cold, cultivated tones, the contemptuous drawl, the light, mocking laughter of the various men of pleasure who were discussing the latest scandal of the town, the newest beauty and the finest cook.

Here Bertram came upon Lord Carden, a good-natured idler, who could tell him better than anyone else what society and the world generally thought of the coming trial.

"I say, Clydale, you're in a deuce of a mess, are you not?" his lordship said, striking a fustee on his case, "tell me, what does it all mean? Have you gone and married the wrong woman, and begun to take life woefully in earnest in consequence? I hear strange things from our mutual friend, Lady Alesia—deuced fine woman that."

"I'm as much mystified as you are, Carden; from all I hear there's a son of Anatole's who lays claim to everything," answered the duke, quietly.

"And Alesia says he is the heir, her brother married a gipsy—deuced odd card that Anatole, mad as a hatter, I always thought—wonder he didn't take a fancy to a Zulu; these very odd satirists make life a comedy to themselves."

"And a tragedy to others," said Bertram, with a frown; "he leaves his cruel, selfish deeds to bear evil fruit in after years and blast the happiness and reputation of the innocent."

"My dear fellow, don't go in for tragedy, that won't pay in this age; we laugh at everything. Turn an epigram on the man and leave him in peace."

"And what says society?" asked the duke, re-lighting his cigar.

"Say? Oh, a thousand pretty things: that you and a famous singer are living together in a cottage on the border of a forest, that you are ruined and have pawned the family diamonds. Others declare your body has been found heavily weighted in the Regent Canal."

"Enough; spare me the rest. Perhaps you have not heard the truth. Mademoiselle Corelli is the Zillah spoken of in the papers. Corelli is Prince Anatole's daughter and one of the claimants."

"Oh! these women," cried Lord Carden, laughing, "they're at the bottom of every mischief under the sun. The little prude Corelli goes in for strict morality you know, keeps a single brougham, abjures rouge, and sends back all her lovers' presents. I do believe she'll take the veil one of these days."

The duke smoked on in grim silence. Her name banded about on the lips of such men as Lord Carden and his colleagues jarred on him. His heart ached with merciless, ceaseless pain, spite of his outward tranquillity and cold, contemptuous indifference. He could see the

golden glory of the dark hair that waved over her shoulders on that homeward drive to the hotel in Italy, he could hear her impassioned murmurs, and the love that had then been a fever and madness yet burnt in his veins.

"So she's not wise in her day and generation," he said, wearily, "and is so unfashionable as to be moral."

"She sent me back the diamond bracelet I offered," said Lord Carden, lazily, "and tore up the note I had composed with considerable effort. I found the fragments on the steps."

The duke was silent; he began to loathe his world, for he adored the purity and innocence of Zillah, whose untamed brilliant beauty, whose exquisite mind had never yet been corrupted by temptation or vice, and his wit, which usually sparkled like a diamond, the dazzling mots that fell from him, poet and orator as he was by nature, deserted him. He was longing for rest, for him there was no witchery in evil, no fascination in the vile lives of the vulgar. He could picture Zillah, saddened and resigned to an unjust fate, but still true to the highest instincts of her nature, and he wished they could be together alone for ever more. He longed to be able to whisper in her ear the little word, "Come," and know that she could fly to him as a bird to its nest.

Perhaps poverty, disappointment and misery were in store for him after all. It would not be a pleasant existence passed with his wife were wealth and luxury to be taken from them. He knew how insufferable would be her weak complaints, how incessant her grumbling, were she denied the life of pleasure to which she had been accustomed. He suffered cruelly in such moments as these, he remembered the proud, passionate light in Zillah's eyes as they met his when her mask fell.

"There is nothing worse than suspense," he muttered, rising to leave.

"Unless it's hope," answered his cynical lordship, "fortune's cheating lottery, where for one prize a thousand blanks are drawn. Why, my dear fellow, you look wretchedly ill, have some cognac."

The duke shook his head; the familiarity of club gossip was no longer soothing, he was not an average common-place man of the world, he might win and lose at races, play high at écarté and "Nap," fight duels and have various fatal pastimes, but he had the capacity of being moved by a mighty love, and the grand and lofty heroism of Zillah, the simplicity of her life and glowing genius were now to him sacred things. He saw her in her true colours, and he loved her with a constant and mighty affection, because it was not entirely physical, but had a heaven-born strength. His natural refinement of voluptuousness made him a lover, without the sickly sentimentalism of a Werther, and at the same time a man who, wrestling with temptation, vows to rise above it, and, suffering always, yet be brave and true.

When he returned home to his mansion in Eaton Square he found the duchess still complaining of indisposition, lying on a couch in her boudoir, some friends were with her, and Lady Alesia, who had just arrived, being determined to face the coming storm, emerged from the dining-room.

The duke had not been prepared to find such a sudden change in anyone. She looked wasted and quite aged.

She did not appear to dread his anger or contempt; she smiled as usual. She explained everything with clever subtlety, and when he spoke of deception, disgrace and dishonour, smiled quite sweetly, assuring him all would be well.

But anyone watching her closely when alone and off her guard would have seen an awful burning light in her eyes as of one scheming a deadly crime. She had recourse to opium in her solitude, she sat cold as a statue amid all the splendour of marble and bronze, pictures and china, in her daughter's home, and she laughed to herself grimly from time to time as though conscious of defying an unjust fate, and shaken with such whirlwinds of passion, as boded ill to any who provoked her wrath.

"He will surely keep his word," she muttered, rousing herself from her trance. "Can I forget his savage oaths, his murderous threats? A drunkard is a madman. His love is turned to hatred. We shall see which will win in the coming struggle. Ah, Zillah, it was an evil day for you when you pitted your strength and cunning against mine."

She was a woman of no half measures, all her actions had been daring and unscrupulous, and when she felt herself challenged to a combat she was merciless as any snake in a poisonous swamp, that will raise itself to strike—and kill.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT THE TRIANON THEATRE.

Then a sob
Took all her breath and closed her prayer,
A presence newly stirred the air.

Zillah had been deceived into a state of false peace, through the professed amiability of her enemies. Nothing could have been franker than Lady Alesia's expressions of regret at the misguided folly which she declared blinded Zillah's eyes to the truth and made her determine to appeal to the laws of her native land for justice.

"You will lose every penny you have made," her ladyship wrote, after discussing the affair calmly and quietly. "You are the princess's daughter, yes, we do not deny it, but there was no legal marriage between your mother and him; therefore, when you ran away from us, you, whom he had always disliked, he cared nothing, he was afraid of exposing the animosity of your mother's relatives were the affair known, and we believed in the end you were dead."

Mathias read her ladyship's letters too and pronounced her a wonderfully astute and daring person. He thought that few could have led a "forlorn hope" with more audacity, but he had never calculated on the murderous designs to which she was surrendering herself, or understood the danger of the human instruments she was working with, whose brutalised passions knew no check.

Zillah was still at her hotel, and was just partaking of a late breakfast when Mathias appeared. She had agreed to sing on this one occasion at the Trianon Theatre, that belonged to an English nobleman who had entreated her assistance in aid of the families of a ship-wrecked crew, whose sufferings had excited her warmest pity.

The opera season was over, but she had agreed to pay the artistes at her own expense and they would give "Italian Opera" at the Trianon for three nights in succession.

The idea was novel and promised to be rewarded with great success—her motive was so utterly disinterested. Tickets were purchased at enormous prices, and she was delighted to hear that the sufferers would be largely benefited by her scheme.

The Trianon was not a very large house, but it was daintily built and luxuriously fitted up. The Duke of Riverdale, who had spent large sums on it had made it a sort of hobby of his for high art and first-class entertainments, but it had proved the very reverse of profitable, as are most hobbies, for when burlesque and extravaganza are excluded, together with the attractions of the vulgar, mindless dolls who, unable to speak the Queen's English, merely draw through costume and infamy, it often happens that a theatre of this kind will be a dead loss to its proprietor.

Zillah sat thoughtfully in the large and spacious room allotted her, the furniture of which was perfect both in form and colour; vases of flowers decorated the corners and fine water-colours hung from the walls. And yet, in spite of all this glow of luxury and taste, how lonely and sad she was. It was a brilliant, glittering life, but it was a chilly one, for she was alone.

"You think my scheme will be a success, then?" she said to Mathias, who had commenced to play one of Chopin's Mazurkas.

"There is not a place to be had for love or

money in the house. The widows and orphans of the poor sailors have a chance of going in handsomely for annuities."

"I am glad—so glad," she murmured. "To relieve their cares ever so little after their cruel loss seems to lift a weight off my heart."

Mathias watched her intently; he saw a return of the old languor and lifelessness.

"Have you heard or seen anything lately of Michael?" she asked, and there came over her bright, poetic face a look of great anxiety.

"Nothing particularly interesting. He is rioting in large sums of money and drinks hard. I suppose he means to enjoy himself fully ere being taken care of, free of expense, by government. He's going straight towards Portland."

"I don't know why, Mathias, but I feel so strangely depressed to-day," she said, walking across the floor.

"It's over-work; you want change, my dear. After these three operas at the Trianon are over we'll go back to Italy. There can be no trial for a few months."

She sang over a few of the airs from "Faust," and then went to her room to rest. Her head ached and throbbed, her whole system seemed out of gear. She glanced from her window at the regiments of roofs and chimneys, the clouds of smoke. She would be glad to leave the great city for the brighter colours of a fairer climate.

"Why will not the old love die?" she murmured, and then wondered, as she always did when alone, what sort of world it must seem to the duke were his fortune taken from him, and he heard only the cold, careless laughter and the mocking murmurs of those who had once loved and then hated him.

At the very moment that Zillah thought of all these things the duke was reading one of the morning papers announcing her name and appearance to-night at the Trianon theatre in "Faust."

Again and again he read an account of the admiration her generosity excited, and he felt that the temptation to behold Zillah as Margherita was more than he could resist. Once more, just once, to behold her, to feast his eyes on her beauty, ere, maddened and alone, he realised they were for ever parted; and Madeline's jealous eyes saw those lingering glances on the columns of the paper, and she drew her own conclusions.

He left the room somewhat abruptly, ordered his brougham, and was driven rapidly to the doors of the Trianon. Some of the men hanging about the theatre recognised him, for the papers had been full of exciting suggestions—cynical, bitter, and piquant, all in turn—in connection with the approaching struggle. It was known that the Corelli claimed the fortune and possessions appropriated by the Duchess of Clydale.

Bertram went up to the box-office and said: "I want a box for to-night. Have you any to spare?"

"Lord Carden has just telegraphed to us for one, your grace," was the answer. "He offers ten guineas. We were about to close for that."

"Let me have it for twenty, then," he said, quietly, and threw down the notes, "and that's settled."

The men stared. One of the hangers-on—a dark, saw-toothed form, looking like one of the villains of melodrama at the "Vic"—laughed, and turned aside. It had been a somewhat grim chuckle, and then he slouched away with his hands in his ulster's pockets, and was presently joined by other "lamps" of a like description.

"Money's flying about pretty freely, mate," he whispered. "The house will be packed full to-night as herrings in a barrel."

The duke drove home and found the duchess, her mother, and some friends, at luncheon. He ate little, and withdrew into the library, where he smoked steadily for some hours. This would never do. His love for Zillah must be crushed, it was growing beyond feverish unrest, it was beginning to master his reason as it had vanquished his senses. Was he indeed captive to her beauty and grace and genius? The world

bore tribute to her surpassing gifts, and she was lost to him.

"I shall not dine at home to-night," he said to his pale wife, whose womanly instinct divined where he was going.

"Zillah is resolved to gain possession of him," thought Madeline, with passionate pain. "It is a merciless vengeance. She claims her birth-right and her lover—she will hold both."

She said no more as he announced his decision of dining out. He went to his dressing-room and leant before the mirror, taking out some fine diamond studs and preparing to dress as usual. Dine? What did he want with dining? He might take a outlet and a pint of Marobrunker at the Café Royale in Regent Street or turning into the Trianon. Love begins to be a considerable curse when it makes a fine young man lose a naturally healthy appetite.

His toilette finished, he descended to the hall, his brougham and a pair of fine bays dashed to the door, and Madeline caught a glimpse of him as he flung his sables over his arm and prepared to descend the steps.

"He has gone to see Zillah," she whispered in Lady Alesia's ear, and Lady Alesia smiled affectionately at her daughter and patted her cheek, bidding her go and lie down in her boudoir, and some nice hot tea should be brought her.

But Madeline was not in a mood to be played with or caressed. She resolved to dress and follow him. Led by an impulse, she was doing a very foolish thing, and the very one that would be most likely to alienate him from her still more, but she could not bear to think of him watching the soul-lit, splendid loveliness of her hated cousin.

She dressed herself slowly. Lady Alesia, believing she was resigned to circumstances, went to her room and smoked a dainty cigarette. She looked terribly anxious. She was annoyed beyond all measure that the duke should have gone down to the theatre to-night. She set her small, white teeth, tightened her lips, waiting—for what?

Madeline wore a rich, white velvet dress, with her diamond rivière and some hot-house flowers at her breast. It was now about nine o'clock. The summer evening was fine and clear as she sat beside the open window of her boudoir, her dark, glossy hair was coiled about her small, classic head, the summer breeze stirred a few loose curls on her temples.

"He has gone to Zillah," murmured an inner voice. Love has quick instincts. She guessed—she knew the rest.

Then a hurried step came up the stairs, the door opened, and Lady Alesia, panting and excited, stood before her.

"Are you mad?" she cried, pointing to her daughter's dress and jewels. "Do you want to lose his love for ever? Do you not think he will hate you for following him and tracking his steps? No, my dear child, I cannot stand by and see you destroy all chance of happiness. You shall not go—"

"Not go? But I mean to most decidedly," said Madeline, rising to her feet. "I am not a child to be talked to like this."

Her lips quivered as she seized her costly fan and bouquet of hot-house flowers, and then threw them from her with a petulant gesture.

Lady Alesia glanced at her watch—a quick, furtive glance, that did not escape Madeline.

"Hear me, Madeline," she said, more calmly. "I but advise you for your good. What other motive can I have? Do not go this evening to the theatre."

"Why?" asked the duchess, startled at this strangeness of mood and manner.

"Oh! for a hundred reasons. Your husband will detest such conjugal surveillance—all men do, above all such men as he."

There was a dogged obstinacy of purpose in the duchess that now asserted itself.

She drew her embroidered Indian cashmere over her shoulders again, took up her bouquet and went to the door.

The French clock on her mantelpiece chimed the quarter.



[FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH.]

"Good bye," she said, with a smile, "we shall no doubt return together, we have not yet lost wealth, ease, and luxury; when they vanish Heaven help me."

"Hush, hush!" said Lady Alesin, quickly. "They shall not vanish. But wait just ten minutes. Child, I implore you to listen to me."

She wrung her hands as Madeline turned away.

"After all she may be too late," she muttered, "too late for harm to happen to her."

The duchess arrived at the theatre in about a quarter of an hour, and was at once conducted to the duke's box, which happened to be the one nearest the stage.

Lord Carden was above in the amphitheatre stalls, he had paid two guineas for a seat and was in anything but a placid frame of mind.

When the door of the box opened Madeline shrank back a little, dreading the look of scorn and hatred the duke might turn on her for her appearance.

But no, he scarcely noticed her, he was absorbed in watching Zillah as Margherita in the celebrated garden scene in the opera, which is the finest in the whole work.

Lord Carden had now descended, and was seated in the duke's box by Madeline's side.

Complete silence reigned around, people were entranced with the rich freshness of the voice, the dreamy absorption of the young artist in her part, the mingling of homeliness, simplicity, pathos, and passion with which Goethe endowed his heroine, and which she portrayed to the life.

Zillah was an ideal Margaret, the anguish in her tones when she sang "I falter, ah! begone, I falter, I faint with fear," was heart-thrilling and inspired.

And then Faust entreates, implores, worships; the love so perfect, so sad and fatal gave irrepressible pathos to the scene.

But more beautiful than all besides was Zillah singing alone before the open window at the moment when, her love confessed, she craves her lover's presence with a yearning that threatens to dispossess reason.

Love has passed those sober confines and is approaching madness.

A heavy sigh burst from the duke, he trembled as the passionate words fell on his ear, and involuntarily her eyes sought his.

"He loves me, he loves me, repeat it again,
Bird that callest, soft wind that fallest
When the light of evening dieth
Bear a part in the strain.
The air is calm with the very breath of love.
At morn, at morn, ah! speed the night away.
Come, ah! come—"

Now the cheering broke out wildly.

Zillah was about to repeat the last air when an awful cry caught every ear—the snake-like, cruel cry of:

"Fire!"

It came from the gallery, it was caught up by the pit.

Men and women sprang fierce and palpitating to their feet and rushed like wild beasts before the flames of a prairie towards the staircase.

The fearful confusion and terror increased, screams, shrieks, oaths mingled, the flames came from the stage and were spreading wildly.

The maddened throng in the theatre fought, stamped, and stifled the life out of many who fell beneath them suffocated and paralysed with dread.

And it was all the work of an instant.

The terror of the people made them for the time being into maniacs—women in the private boxes and stalls fainted, the curtain on the stage was on fire, the flames were crackling and hissing and curling amid the scenery; clouds of lace and silk were devoured by the furious element, and, worse than all, more terrible than the people's shrieks, the din of voices, the tramp of feet—was the sight of Zillah, white as death, in the midst of the flames, her dress on fire, her arms and neck scorched and blackened with smoke.

In the hurry and fright they had forgotten her; "Sauve qui peut" had been the cry of the other singers, the band disappeared and escaped as if by miracle—she, all alone, waited for death.

But at that terrible moment, with lightning

speed, with the might of a whirlwind, and the fury of an avalanche—a man sprang to her side, amid the livid sheets of flame, amid the stifling smoke, and bore her in his arms from the stage and flung his sables round her and extinguished the fire ere it was too late.

Better perish with her than stand by and see her burnt to death before his very eyes.

The duke, ere springing to the stage, had left Madeline to the care of Lord Carden, who preserved his presence of mind in a miraculous degree, as those of his order should do, and had pointed out to the duke the folly of attempting to force any descent with the people fighting like furies.

He had drawn the terrified Madeline to another part of the house where he judged it would be safer to remain till help came.

Zillah felt the duke's arms around her, in spite of the agony she suffered she had not lost consciousness, although her words were weak and inarticulate.

"I will die with you or save you!" he hissed between his teeth as he bore her to a place of safety through the smoke and flames. "The dastardly villains, to have forsaken you."

He rained kisses on her bruised and blackened wrists and arms, he pressed her to his breast, he kissed her lips and eyes and brow in a tempest of adoring love.

"My darling, my darling," he whispered, "oh! live for me—live for the man who adores you, and to whom you once gave life and love."

Dizzy and confused, half blind with pain, she rested her head on his breast, scarcely knowing in truth if she were alive or dead.

"Zillah, Zillah!" he muttered, "look at me—speak to me, we will not, we cannot part."

There came before them an aged and bowed figure with outstretched hands, feeble and paralysed with terror.

It was Matthias.

"Quick! quick! the theatre is in flames!" he cried, pointing to an outer door. "Another second and it will be too late to save her."

(To be Continued.)



[SUNSHINE AFTER CLOUDS.]

A PRETTY ANGLER. (A COMPLETE STORY).

CHAPTER I.

CASTING THE LINE.

"THEY tell me, Bernice, that he has ten thousand a year."

"Everard tells me it is more. So you see, my dear Aureola, he is worth fishing for."

"Some people would say that is degrading—to fish for a man," said Aureola Harman, thoughtfully, "but I don't see it in that light. The plain gold hoop is the prize for women, and in these days of a vast surplus feminine population we must race for it."

Bernice Werner laughed, showed her white, even teeth—ivory prizes she had reason to be proud of—such a set as she possessed Nature gives to a very few. Lounging back in a rocking-chair, she looked at her friend with eyes twinkling with merriment.

"You are a woman of advanced ideas," she said, "and if there were more like you half the bachelor fish now swimming about in the muddy waters of club life would be taken into the pure and sparkling stream of matrimony."

"You have landed your fish, Bernice, and can smile at us who have yet to go through the patient labour of catching one."

"Mine hooked himself."

"With no other bait than blue eyes and wonderful teeth. Now, Bernice, don't be a humbug. You laid yourself out for Everard Denbigh, or he would not have popped."

Bernice shrugged her shoulders and refused to discuss the question. She was engaged, and that was enough. It mattered little now her lover was caught so that he was landed.

"Go in for Charlton Power," she said, "and I daresay you will get him. If not there is David Brewster to fall back upon."

"I do not intend to marry a man who made his money out of patent boots. Besides, he is too old, too self-opinionated, and decidedly a fool. With me it is Charlton Power or nothing. If I fail with him I will pitch my rod, line, and bait into the nearest river and retire to a nunnery."

"What a human firework you would be among the nuns."

"I spoke in jest, although I don't care to jest about such things. Some nuns are better than you, or I, or any of our set. They live for something better than a man and his money. But there goes the second gong. I suppose the fellows are in the drawing-room by this time."

Bernice arose, shook out the folds of her evening dress, and declared herself ready to meet the gay cavaliers below.

The Chyne was the most celebrated place in the western part of Wiltshire, mainly on account of the open hospitality of its owner, Sir Horace Werner. "If you want a really good dinner down here, you must get an introduction to Sir Horace," was a well-worn saying of those who had stretched their limbs beneath his mahogany, and all the young fellows used to add, "And you will get your dinner sweetened with a sight of the prettiest girl for many miles around," until she got engaged to Everard Denbigh, and then suddenly the grapes became sour.

Bernice understood this change in the circle of her admirers, and, determined upon not allowing their affections to languish for the want of an object to lavish them upon, sent for her poor but uncommonly pretty cousin Aureola, who had neither father nor mother, and lived with a maiden aunt, who was as kind as a woman could be, but an example to a Quakeress in the matter of primness.

Though reared in the chill atmosphere of prudery, the natural vivacity of Aureola was not quenched, and as soon as she appeared at the Chyne she burst into full bloom and took the place of Bernice in the hearts of the rejected, and, in a polite way, of course, was

persecuted with attention that might mean anything or nothing.

Like a wise little woman she looked about her for one to settle upon, and after due consideration settled upon Charlton Power as the man who would make her a good husband, and as she had half opened the door of her heart to him she felt she would make him a good wife.

You can gather from the conversation recorded that she was in earnest, and if she persevered the said Charlton Power was as good as caught. But he, although a clever, charming young fellow of five-and-twenty, who believed he knew a thing or two, had no idea of her having bestowed a thought upon him, and having made up his mind to get her if he could, was living in a miserable state of doubt with a light dash of despair.

Sir Herbert and Lady Werner, Charles Power and David Brewster, were in the drawing-room when the two beautiful girls came sailing in. Bernice looked around for Everard Denbigh, but he had not yet appeared, and she made arrangements in her mind to mete out due punishment to him.

"He knows he has got me," she thought, "and can do as he pleases. I will undeceive him before he goes to dinner."

David Brewster—a heavy, lumpy man, with a sullen eye—was the first to greet Aureola, which he did in the uncertain way of half-bred men who have a standing in a circle of society above them, and in shaking hands with her he did a very offensive act—he squeezed her fingers and looked unutterable things.

Aureola calmly withdrew her hand—did not even look into his face, and gave her hand to Charlton Power.

"I feared you were unwell," he softly said, as he bowed. "Lady Werner spoke of you having a headache this afternoon."

"It is nothing," she replied, "but it is kind of you to mention it." Then she glanced at his coat, and saw that he wore a crushed rose. He followed the glance and said:

"You trod upon it this afternoon in the garden. I will wear it, with your permission."

"A strange fancy! But the flower appears to be grateful, and throws off its perfume liberally."

"Then I may wear it?"

She hesitated for a moment, and then said "Yes."

His eyes met a glance from David Brewster, who was frowning, and he honoured that heavy individual with a stare of contempt.

But the look itself did not affect the leather merchant, for that was his business, and he had a wonderful business too, but glanced off as a pea from a shooter against a stone wall. Like the article he dealt in David Brewster was tough, and wanted a deal of thumping and hammering before you could make any impression upon him.

Anything under a kicking was time and energy thrown away.

A few other people dropped in, the sexes being evenly balanced, and the last to appear was Everard Denbigh, who was palpably out of breath. (He went over to Bernice, to make his peace with her, and was received by a woman of ice.)

"Now, Bernice," he said, "don't be a goose, you don't know what has kept me late."

"No, Everard," she replied, "but I suppose I must expect it. Before the first of this month you were always here first."

He was a good-natured, handsome fellow, and he looked at her merrily as he rejoined:

"I see you won't make a guess, so I can't ask you to. You know that horse of mine, Firebrand?"

"I believe you have a horse of that name," she said, coldly.

"He's a regular brute, Bernice, and I don't often bring him out, which accounts for your not having seen him, but I thought I would have him in the dogcart to-night, as there is a moon, and he goes mad if he is kept long in the stable. But he led me a pretty dance."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, capered here, capered there, kicked up, and finally bolted. He ran down the Black Hill and made straight for the sand pit. I couldn't hold him in, and, while I was calculating the chances of jumping out or sitting still, over he, I and the trap and my man went."

"Into the pit?" exclaimed Bernice, with a look of horror.

"Into the pit, Bernice, and most obligingly broke his neck, and my mind is easy about him. There's been a lot of snow lately, and a drift saved me and my man, but we were both pitched into it head first."

Bernice looked at him with tender amazement. She liked to hear him make light of danger, but it was plain to her that she had been within an ace of losing her lover. And she had been thinking of him cruelly and coldly! Oh, why were all those people there to stop her from making full amends for her unkindness?

"I got out as soon as I could," continued Everard, "dragged out Benson, and, finding he had no bones broken, ran down to where Firebrand was lying on his back with the fragments of harness and trap around him. I saw all was over with him, and telling Benson to go back and get the pony chaise and come here for me, I skipped over to Power's place, being the most handy, borrowed a clean collar, and here I am. Power had left, but I knew the run of his house and helped myself."

Bernice was thoroughly repentant, and as his hand in the most accidental way happened to be near hers on the ottoman she covered it with her fan and gave him one of those delightful pressures which, with people in their state, is worth a mine of gold.

"Oh, Everard, I was going to snub you."

"Were you?" he said. "I'm glad you didn't then. But look at your cousin and Power. On my word, they are going it."

"You attend to me," said Bernice, with a pretty affectation of imperiousness, "and let others go their way alone."

"I can't help having a fellow feeling for him, you know," apologised Everard, "being in the same boat. There's Brewster near them.

There's a face—Mephistopheles in pressed leather."

"For shame, you ought to pity him."

"I can't; he's a snob and a prig. I don't like him, there's so much you don't see in him. Turned inside out he would show himself a bad lot. Here's dinner."

The butler had just announced it, and Charlton Power at that moment had his head turned. David Brewster saw his opportunity, dived in, and offered his arm to Aureola.

She had no resource but to take it, and laid her fingers upon his arm in a manner that in an indefinite but still unmistakable way conveyed to him that she did so under protest. But he did not care. The triumph, such as it was, lay with him, and he openly chuckled as he led her past the awakened and dismayed Charlton Power.

Bernice stopped down as she went by and spoke to the outwitted lover. "Serves you right," she said. "A man ought never to be caught napping. Make haste or all the young women will be disposed of, and you will have to put up with Lady Staggerly."

As the lady in question was single, sixty, a little deaf, and a remorseless talker, Charlton Power pounced upon the next best-looking girl, secured her, and by a stroke of diplomacy got into the seat next Aureola.

"You ought to have saved me," she whispered as he sat down.

It was cleverly said, without looking at him, the words just reaching his ear. He answered almost as cleverly.

"I did my best," he said, "but Lady Werner spoke to me at the fatal moment. She said I should divide us as it is."

CHAPTER II.

IN THE SMOKING ROOM.

AFTER the ladies had retired it was the custom of genial Sir Horace to get all the single men and as many married ones as he could into the smoking room, there to lounge in gorgeous jackets and slippers and smoke excellent cigars and drink the finishing brandy and soda.

On that night he secured all who have been named in this story, and a Colonel Tomlinson, who being no talker will not make much show in these pages.

He was a gallant warrior who liked his weed and his drink, and would listen to the talk of others for hours without saying a word himself.

"You will excuse me if I don't out in," he would say, "but I've got into the habit of listening to my wife. She talks like two people, and never wants an answer—it's throwing words away to give her one."

David Brewster had drunk freely that night, but he was not drunk.

He looked a little more sullen than usual, and that was all, and he was almost as silent as the colonel.

Charlton and Everard were both in high spirits and rattled away on different subjects, Sir Horace occasionally breaking in with a word or two.

"I should like to get hold of the big Water Meadow," Everard said, "it is the only bit of land that divides our estates. We should then be able to preserve properly."

"But while the meadow is in the hands of the town corporation," said Charlton, "we shall be always swarmed with trespassers and poachers. It is not half looked after."

"I hear it is for sale," put in Sir Horace.

"That's news," said Everard, "we will run over early to-morrow to hear the price of it."

"The town clerk will give you all the information needed," said Sir Horace.

David Brewster made a mental note at this moment.

In it was embodied a determination to be first in the field on the morrow and secure the meadow at any price.

"I hate both the cubs," he muttered, as he lowered his brows over his eyes, "and where I can put a spoke in their wheels I'll do so."

The colonel by this time had finished his first cigar and fallen into a gentle doze.

Sir Horace was thinking, and the two young men, lowering the tone of their voices, became exceedingly confidential.

"I suppose, Everard, you will be married about February, so as to get it over and be in town for the season."

"Bernice is standing out for May. She thinks it a more poetical month, but I shall bring her to my way of thinking. By the way, Charlton, when is your affair coming off?"

"Mine?" said Charlton, feigning a surprise he certainly did not feel.

"Don't be a humbug," returned Everard, laughing. "Aureola is a nice girl—almost as good as Bernice."

"Better."

"My dear fellow, I am willing to make every allowance for the prejudices of a man who is spoons upon a girl, but you cannot compare Aureola with Bernice."

"I can and do, to the advantage of Aureola; but I suppose after all it is a matter of taste."

"Decidedly. To return to the original idea. When will you make her a happy woman?"

"I don't know. I haven't asked her to be one yet."

"Lose no time then, she is a likely girl, and I know that Brewster," here Everard lowered his voice, "means business in that direction."

Charlton cast a look at that unsmiling gentleman and found that he had apparently joined the colonel in the land of unconsciousness, sitting with his eyes closed and his chin resting upon the front of his shirt.

"He," said Charlton, in disgust, "she would as soon marry a labourer."

"Did she tell you so?" asked Everard, drily.

"No."

"Then don't be quite so cock-sure. Women do some very unaccountable things, and if you hung fire while Brewster blazed away the odds are not a thousand to one against her having him."

"If I thought that," said Charlton, savagely, "I would think no more about her."

"Then you are unjust," Everard replied, "it is the province of women to marry. A husband is her prize in life just as a wife is one to a man, and if they can't get the first prize they must take the second and be thankful. You can't expect her to ask you to marry her."

"No. I hate a forward woman."

"Then don't talk nonsense, my good fellow, but go in and win. I should like to see that brute Brewster floored. What a prig he is."

The gentleman who was honoured by these verbal applications had the inestimable joy of hearing himself thus complimented, for his sleep was feigned, and he had the satisfaction experienced by listeners as a body of hearing no good of himself.

But he had a thick hide, and although he was stung a little he did not feel a tithe of what a sensitive nature would have done.

Still it was not agreeable, and he reckoned it was another item to a score he meant to settle sooner or later.

About half-past eleven Sir Horace went out for a while, and Everard soon followed. Charlton had half a cigar to finish and he remained behind to smoke it and dream of Aureola.

In the midst of a delightful reverie he heard the voice of David Brewster, who appeared to be a little the worse for drink.

His voice was thick and his words a little wandering.

"Have another brandy and shoda?" he was saying.

"Did you speak to me?" rejoined Charlton, looking up rather peevishly.

"Of course I did, my boy."

David Brewster was never so repulsive as when he tried to be mirthful, and Charlton Power felt as if he would have liked to kick him, but believing he was the worse for wine he controlled his feelings and answered, quickly:

"No, thanks, I'm off home."

"Hard job to tear yourself away, I s'pose."

"What do you mean?"

"Lovely creature under this roof," said Brewster, winking, "all charming and innocent. Don't know anything— isn't fishing for a husband—didn't fish for me. Oh, no!"

And he made a sign indicative of the mirthful light in which he looked upon Aureola's innocence.

Charlton was terribly nettled, but he could not strike a man who was drunk, especially as they had met under the roof of another.

He sat very stiff and upright, resolved to bear the infliction of coarse impertinence with the stoicism of a martyr.

"Tell you what," pursued Brewster, leaning over a little and getting more and more confidential, after the way of intoxicated men, "she's a nice girl."

"We had better not discuss Miss Harman," said Charlton, shortly.

"Oh, yes, we must," insisted Brewster, with drunken gravity. "I must if you don't, for I'm an injured man, I am. Before you showed up I was first favourite—nobody like me. We used to be in the garden together in the snug corners, and cooing about like a pair of turtle doves. But when you showed with your ten or twelve thousand a year I was shunted. Shunted, sir, that's what I was, and I say it was mean."

Charlton Power looked at his communicative and, it is needless to say, lying companion with intense disgust, but he could not quite shake off a whispering that what he was saying might be true. He did not want to believe Aureola could be so degraded as to lay herself out for such a man as sat near him, apparently dull and stupid at his best, and now sodden with drink.

"You may have a strong imagination," said Charlton, curtly, "perhaps you may have fancied Miss Harman encouraged you."

"No," chuckled Brewster, "there was no fancy in it, and if you turned cold to-morrow she would turn to me again."

Charlton rose up, savage and disgusted. He was angry with himself for listening to such belderdash and positively leaning towards a belief in it.

"I'm off," he said. "Good night."

"Here, stop, old fellow, another brandy and soda won't hurt you."

But Charlton was already out of the room, and David Brewster's face suddenly lost its stupidity as he sank back in his seat with a meaning grin upon his face.

"I think I have worked that pretty smartly," he muttered, "and it's on the cards that I get her yet. I'd like to marry her if only out of spite. Accounts between us would then soon be settled. I'd break her heart and bring her down so that she should tremble at my very footstep. It has been done before and can be done again if the right man takes it in hand."

He went to the door and listened to the sound of people talking. It was only Charlton taking leave of Sir Horace and Everard, and David Brewster chuckled again as he detected a depressed tone in his voice. He had shot an arrow and hit him.

CHAPTER III.

A BAD CAST AND A MISS.

THE next morning Everard, as in love and duty bound, appeared at the Chyne, but Charlton Power did not come with him as the ladies anticipated.

Aureola was intensely disappointed and Bernice expressed her opinion on the remissness of the absent one pretty strongly to her lover.

"Mr. Power is almost rude," she said, "after being so very attentive to Aureola. But that is the way of you men. It is a matter of indifference to you how much you may compromise a woman while amusing yourselves. You never spare us."

"You do Power an injustice," replied Everard. "When we met this morning it became a question between us as to who should go and see about the big Water Meadow."

"And he volunteered, setting a piece of land against a woman?"

"No. The fact is—we—we—settled it by lottery."

"That is, you tossed for it," said Bernice, scornfully.

Everard could not deny it, and for a man of his magnificent physique looked very foolish. The pair had tossed and he had won.

"Mr. Power is sure to call in the afternoon," he said.

"Mr. Brewster is more attentive," said Bernice, "here he is coming up the avenue."

Aureola, who had listened in silence to the foregoing conversation, looked out and saw her "heavy admirer," as she called him, riding up to pay his respects. She was angry with Charlton for risking anything concerning her upon the turn of a coin, and accordingly laid herself out to be very pleasant to her other suitor.

David Brewster was in better form than usual. He was as near to something genial as his nature could possibly be and had never appeared to such an advantage. Even Lady Werner, who had strong notions about family and blood, liked him a little that morning.

To Bernice he was courteous, to Everard friendly, and to Aureola devoted. The improvement in him was surprising.

"Something must have inspired him," said Bernice to her lover.

"Or galvanised him," replied Everard. "He has had a shock of some sort. He is almost as active as a doll worked with a string."

"He is no favourite of yours."

"Or of yours, Bernice, until now."

The conversation, after being of a broken nature, for awhile became general, and David Brewster asked after Charlton Power.

"He seemed to me rather unwell when he left last night," he said.

Charlton had confided to Everard the nature of the conversation that took place in the drawing-room, and the above remark was a little trying.

Everard bit his lip and replied:

"Power was never in better health than he was last night. There was nothing to disturb him. He has gone to Hainborough on business. He thinks of buying a piece of land next to his estate."

"I hope you are not referring to the Water Meadow," said David Brewster, with a world of secret joy in his cunning eyes.

"That's it. But why should you hope about it?"

"Because he will be too late—I have bought it."

Not a muscle of Everard's face moved. With a skilful, practised nerve, he hid the fury this announcement roused. But David Brewster did not want outward signs to convince him, he knew he had been victorious, and that was enough.

"You have quite a passion for buying land," Aureola said.

"I am getting a very fair estate together," he replied. "I have nothing else to do with my money—until I marry."

He was a skilful man in his way and the last few words conveyed a wish to Aureola, as it would have done to any other woman. But she was not disposed to accept his attentions yet, although it was tiresome of Charlton Power to make so light of seeing her as to toss to decide whether he should come or not.

Everard Denbigh was very wroth about the loss of the Water Meadow.

"He heard what we were talking about last night," he said to Bernice, "and sneaked in before us this morning. If that has been his mode of procedure I shall cut him."

After the men were gone Bernice and Aureola had one of their little consultations together. The face of things had changed a little and their tactics had to be altered accordingly.

"That Brewster person," Bernice said, "has two qualities in him rather dangerous to our cause. He is very keen and unscrupulous. I should not be surprised if he spoils you with Charlton Power."

"If he does," said Aureola, "I'll marry him

and have my revenge by torturing him all the rest of his days."

"Never think of marrying out of spite," Bernice returned, "it is a bad game for any woman to play, and would be particularly bad in your case."

"I thank you for your advice," Aureola said, "and I daresay it is very good, but I think I would rather go my own course."

"Very well," Bernice rejoined, "and I hope you will go on a wise one."

That Aureola was determined to go her own way was apparent, and as opposition would only stimulate her if it should be a foolish one, Bernice resolved upon interfering no more.

In the afternoon when Charlton Power called Aureola was not at home.

He went away in the frame of mind that leads a bad man to commit murder or some desperate, reckless deed, and a good one to confound his stars and the ill-luck they have brought upon him. He drove down to Everard Denbigh's place, Coombe Leigh—a fine old place that had been in the possession of the Denbighs for three centuries.

"Something wrong, eh?" said Everard, as his friend, with a face as white as anger could make it, and brow black as night.

"I've been to the Chyne, and Aureola refused to see me," was the reply.

"That doesn't look like fishing."

"Not much; that fellow Brewster lied."

"Of course he did. What will you do?"

"Shut myself up and not go near the Chyne for a month."

"Now take my advice, Charlton—"

"Don't give it, old fellow; advice is seldom followed, and I assure you I don't wish to offend you by ignoring yours."

"All right," said Everard, philosophically, "go your own way. There's a pair of you in Aureola and yourself, and between you there will be a pretty kettle of fish."

Charlton Power was in a very determined mood and kept away from the Chyne for two whole days. Then he began to wonder if he was not making a bit of a fool of himself, and wished he had not as Everard said "let Brewster in."

"He is there every day," he said, on the morning of the third day, as the two friends strolled through the park, gun in hand, with the hope of knocking over a rabbit or two, "and to-day they are going skating together."

"Do you mean to say she is going out with that fellow?" exclaimed Charlton, his face the picture of intense disgust.

"Sir Horace and Lady Werner are going, and I must be there too, as Bernice makes one of the party. We intend to try the ice on the great lake."

"I don't wish you any particular harm, but I hope it won't bear."

"You are in a nice frame of mind, old fellow. Join us and, when you get a chance, cannon against Brewster and bowl him over; I'll bet it's as much as he can do to keep his feet."

"I'll come," said Charlton, making up his mind like a desperate man without much thought, "but remember this, I don't belong to your party, I am coming BY ACCIDENT, just to let her see how little I care for her flirting with that addle-headed fellow."

"How do you know she is flirting?"

"You said so."

"No, I didn't. I said that Brewster came regularly to the Chyne, but I said nothing about his getting encouragement."

"I wonder at Sir Horace receiving him."

"It's a political business. Sir Horace is going to stand for the borough next election, and Brewster is a great gun in the Liberal interest."

Here a rabbit came skipping out of the bracken, offering his white-lined tail as a mark to aim at. Power raised his gun, fired and missed.

"That's the third this morning," said Everard, quietly.

"I'll have no more of it," replied Charlton, "but go home and get my skates. Where do you luncheon?"

"At the Chyne."

"Oh, of course," said Charlton, bitterly, "and

Brewster will be there; and you will all make as much of him as you can, and what a jolly party you will be. If I didn't know you, Everard, as well as I do I should say you had joined this conspiracy to ruin my peace."

"Hit, indeed," said Everard, with much gravity. "I had no idea your case was so serious; but who is this coming up the avenue? As I live it is Sir Horace and the girls. Now don't run away; you can't clear out decently, they have seen us."

Charlton had no idea of going. On the contrary as soon as he saw the party he decided to remain and make the amende honorable to Aureola for his neglect.

He expected to find her very cold and distant, but she was nothing of the sort. She gave him her hand in an evenly agreeable manner, asked if he had had any sport, and rattled away on half a dozen things, without making the least allusion to his absence from the Chyne.

This indifference was more galling to him than any reproach could have been, and it stimulated him in his wishes not to let her slip from him if he could possibly help it. He even fished for an invitation to join the party in the afternoon by making an allusion to the frosty weather and the excellent condition of his ponds at home. But he did not get it.

"You have no need to go far to enjoy your skating," Aureola said.

"I do not always skate at home," was his answer.

Sir Horace had come to Combe Leigh to acquaint Everard with the news that a dissolution of Parliament was imminent, and he was too much wrapped up in this exciting intelligence to have eyes or ears for anything else. When he had got through it he turned his horse's head and gave the word for home.

"You have lost ground there most decidedly," Everard said.

Charlton ground his teeth and angrily kicked a rotten branch away from his feet and strode on.

"She is a heartless flirt, that's what she is," he said, "and must have very bad taste."

"You give her up, I suppose?"

"Not yet. I shall be on the lake this afternoon. Good bye."

"Adieu, old fellow; we meet there at four, as we are going to do a bit each of daylight and moonlight."

"Keep Brewster away from me when daylight is going," growled Charlton, and walked off at a rapid rate.

CHAPTER IV.

FROZEN OUT.

SKATING is an exhilarating exercise and an accomplishment that is at once graceful, healthy, and pleasing to the operator. But when a man can't skate and gets upon skates he does an act that unnecessarily excites his nerves, moves his fears, and either irritates the lookers-on or excites their laughter.

David Brewster was a man to whom skating was in the list of the unattainable. He could get along, it is true, in a floundering, sprawling fashion—but that is not skating, and he added to the aggravation of his offence by not falling down half so often as novices or awkward skaters usually do.

It is bad enough to have to look at a muff on the ice when he gratifies you with innumerable sprawls, but when he is apparently kept on his feet by a succession of miracles, lumbering here and there like a barge in the river, bumping against and upsetting the more graceful craft without doing any damage to himself, the spectacle is maddening.

When asked by Aureola if he skated he readily replied "Yes," and he brought down to the Chyne one of the newest and best pair of skates in which he intended to exhibit his ungainliness. He also brought a very handsome pair for Aureola and was a little chagrined to find that she preferred an old pair of her cousin's.

"I am used to these," she said, holding them

up as they stood by the door at the starting hour. "And I am very fond of old friends."

"And you don't dislike new ones I hope," he said.

"Ah! new friends, have I any?" sighed Aureola, and took up a pensive attitude that was very distracting. David Brewster felt his sluggish heart suddenly double its rate of action, and he inwardly vowed that he would know his fate that day.

Such a man was incapable of real, impassioned love, but there is no living thing quite insensible to the mysterious instinct which draws the sexes to each other. Had David Brewster been asked the question "Do you love?" he would have answered "Yes," and believed what he said.

He had looked upon Aureola and seen that she was a woman of rare beauty and of inspiring presence. A glance from her eyes roused his sluggish blood, and finding it coursed more freely that it was wont to do he fancied that he had something to offer worthy of a woman's acceptance, but it was a poor representation of that which binds two hearts together, a feeble band to hold two lives in union.

Of her he did not think. It was enough that he admired her handsome face and superb figure, and what she thought of him was quite a secondary consideration. It never entered into his head to recognise that a one-sided affection in marriage is a miserable thing, with long years of repentance, reproach, and perhaps shame and ruin in its train.

They walked to the great lake, whither a servant with chairs had been sent before them. They found the man watching a single figure careering about the lake in a manner perfectly marvellous in the eyes of David Brewster.

"I thought these waters were private," he said to Sir Horace.

"So they are, entirely my property," replied the baronet, as he fixed his glasses and took a survey of the intruder.

Everard knew who it was and whispered something in the ear of Bernice. She smiled and looked at Aureola, whose cheeks gained a little colour, although her look was hard and cold.

"I thought he would be here," Bernice softly said.

"He might have stayed away," returned Aureola.

Sir Horace had by this time recognised the figure and was waving his hand to him.

"It is Power," he said, "the cleverest man of these parts on the ice. He goes as easily on skates as a swallow on the wing."

Charlton now came flying up—stopping short in front of the party with a dexterous movement of his skates.

"I must apologize for this intrusion, Sir Horace," he said. "All the water of my place is so limited in extent that I can't get a fair run."

"Don't apologise, my dear fellow," replied the baronet. "I am uncommonly glad to see you. Aureola, dear, I think you had better allow Mr. Power to put your skates on. He understands such things so thoroughly."

"Mr. Brewster has kindly volunteered," replied Aureola, bowing frigidly to Charlton.

The privileged but unhappy Brewster began his task, and being his first attempt he bungled it miserably. After a long struggle, however, he got them on and assisted her to rise.

"I shall be ready in a minute," he said. "Will you sit down?"

"But I don't think mine are on quite right," Aureola said. "The keels are not straight and the straps are crossed differently to what they usually are."

"Will you allow me to assist you?" said Charlton, who had been standing by with a good-natured smile upon his face.

"Thank you," said Aureola, more icily than ever. "But Mr. Brewster is, I think, competent to fix my skates."

David Brewster, visibly flurried, went at them again, but the delight of having her pretty foot in his hand in no way compensated for the misery of conscious failure. The skates were too much for him and he gave in.

But he would not yield to Charlton Power, and Everard being engaged with Bernice, he, without consulting Aureola, called upon the man servant to assist him.

This was too much for the fair Aureola, and with quick, impatient fingers she rapidly adjusted her skates to perfection, got upon her feet and glided out upon the lake with the grace of a swan on the water.

Charlton Power followed close behind her, and asked:

"Shall we make a figure while Mr. Brewster is getting ready?"

"I prefer waiting for him, thank you," she said.

"But judging by his labour for yourself, you will have some time to wait."

Her eyes flashed angrily, but his being so persistent was not entirely disagreeable to her, and she could not avoid a sensation of pleasure as with a courteous bow he began the figure and invited her to join him.

"Are you sure I am not taxing you too much?" she said.

"Not at all," was his answer, "I am only too delighted."

In a few minutes David Brewster joined them with unexpected abruptness, owing to his having started at a great rate and lost control of his skates.

He came on at a great speed, preserving his balance by a way he knew not, and projecting himself between the pair, tripped up Aureola, who was dexterously caught by Charlton and saved from a dangerous fall.

David Brewster fell, as such men do, heavily, and without half an effort to save himself.

The fright attending his rapid passage had taken away half his breath, and the fall scattered the rest. So he lay gasping and speechless.

Aureola released herself from the arms of Charlton, which held her with significant firmness, and feigned an interest in the fallen man that deceived nobody, not even David himself.

"Oh, dear," she said, "I do hope you have not hurt yourself. It was so stupid of me not to get out of your way."

If the penalty of laughing had been capital punishment Charlton Power could not have resisted an outburst.

There was something irresistibly ludicrous in the graceful Aureola apologising to the blundering booby who had narrowly escaped being the author of a serious accident that he lost his manners and roared.

Aureola flashed her indignation from her eyes and sobered him.

He apologised and offered to assist David Brewster to his feet.

Both apology and offer of assistance met with a cold reception.

"I can get up alone," snarled the fallen one.

Aureola only favoured Charlton with the slightest of bows, so he swung round and went in pursuit of Everard and Bernice, who, unconscious of the little contretemps, were gliding towards a distant part of the lake.

CHAPTER V.

A THAW.

"How unkind of you, Mr. Power," said Bernice, "to leave my cousin to the tender mercies of Mr. Brewster. He can't skate a bit."

"His deficiency in that direction is compensated for by something else," said Charlton, gloomily. "Miss Harman declines to have anything to do with me."

"Could you expect anything else, deserting us so shamefully as you have done?"

"I know I am to blame," he replied, "and I wanted to do penance."

"You are doing penance."

"Yes, lone penance, and I wanted to show my repentance in good society. Miss Harman is very cruel to me. Look at her now, blundering about with that booby Brewster."

"What shocking language," exclaimed Bernice, with an amused glance at Everard, who was positively grinning.

"I can't help it, I am very sorry," Charlton said. "I am hipped. Suppose we have a race—I will give you both fifty yards' start. Course, from here back to where the chairs are."

"Done, Mr. Bounceable," said Bernice. "Now, Everard, hand in hand against the enemy and let us beat him into fits."

"Off you go," said Charlton, "I can calculate the distance."

Everard and Bernice started, and when they have covered fifty yards or a little over Charlton went upon their trail.

It was a smart race and the pace was killing. They reached the post, that is, the chairs, neck and neck.

"A dead heat!" cried Sir Horace, who had been watching the race with delight. "Splendid! Suppose we have another."

"I'll back Power against Brewster," said Everard. "The course, across the lake, Brewster to have half the distance."

The individual referred to now came in with Aureola, and hearing his name mentioned asked what was the matter.

Sir Horace told him of the proposed race.

"I'll back Power for a fiver!" cried Everard.

"Really," stammered Brewster, "I have had so little practice at this sort of thing that I don't see how—"

"Take the bet," said Aureola, "and beat him."

Having said this she glanced defiance at Charlton, who frowned and made up his mind to run into Brewster if he could and give him another tumble.

"There can be no sin in breaking his neck—the brute," he muttered.

Everard, seeing him so very much annoyed, took his arm and whispered in his ear:

"Don't be an ass. Beat him and laugh at her. That's the way to win. The fellow won't do a third of the distance."

It was a ludicrous match to make, but there was some earnestness about it.

David Brewster, strengthened by a little whisper, thought it worth his while to risk defeat, and Charlton Power, aggravated by Aureola's support of his heavy rival, was resolved upon winning.

Everard was appointed starter, and Sir Horace said he would be the umpire at the finish.

The lake was not more than four hundred yards across, and the start given was tremendous.

Barring accidents the result ought to have been certain.

The merest muff had a chance of beating the champion.

Charlton skimmed over to his post, and David Brewster sprawled his way to his. The gravity of both the competitors was a great deal too much for Everard, and he was in agonies to keep himself from a fit of laughter.

He took up his post between them, and in orthodox style cried out:

"Are you ready, gentlemen? Go!"

David Brewster immediately went down, and fell heavily, but in feverish haste he scrambled to his feet and put all his weight and knowledge into his efforts to get along.

He was a lucky man at all times upon the ice, and went through unpremeditated movements that would have upset many a better man.

He now fairly risked his neck in his efforts to win, and soon, as a professional reporter would say, "got the steam on."

Charlton gained on him fast, but he saw he had all his work cut out to be the first past the chairs, and he fairly flew over the ice, his skates screaming like sea-gulls before a storm.

Everard applauded and laughed, Sir Horace clapped his hands, and Bernice and Aureola waved their handkerchiefs.

Fifty yards from home, David Brewster still led by fifty yards, and victory seemed certain. But as nothing is lost until something is won, and as there is many a slip between the cup

and the lip so was there a hitch in the termination to the race.

David Brewster, who had come all this way considerably out of the centre of gravity, overtaxed beneficent nature by getting a little too much off his balance, and within five yards of winning, came down a purler. Charlton flying behind, saw him fall, but too late to save himself, and pitching over his rival came in a winner by a yard or two, head first and sprawling.

The air echoed again and again with the laughter of the lookers-on, and even the servant, schooled never to laugh in the presence of his superiors, had to turn away and fight with a fit of laughter that made him suffer untold agonies. Neither of the competitors, however, saw much joke in it.

"You should have kept out of my course," grunted David Brewster, as he got up very slowly.

"You should have kept upon your feet," snarled Charlton, then, catching sight of Aureola's face red with laughter, he frowned majestically, and tried to bear his fall with dignity.

But it was no use; laughter was the order of the day, and he soon joined them. David Brewster alone remained sedate, but he had aching bones to help him to preserve his gravity.

"It is good fun riding upon chairs with somebody pushing you," said Bernice when she at last could speak with composure.

"Splendid idea," said David Brewster, seizing one. "Miss Harman, will you permit me to give you a run?"

"With pleasure," she said, although she was sorry it was not Charlton who had volunteered his services. She was beginning to think it was time he was forgiven and peace made.

"Don't go on the east side," said Charlton. "It requires a skater to get over there with safety. It is not so sheltered as the rest, and the wind kept off the first frost."

"I have been over it," said David Brewster, "and it didn't even crack."

"Perhaps it bent," said Charlton.

"Not much."

"Ice that bends is dangerous. If it cracks without giving in it is all right."

"This is not the first time I have been on the ice," said David Brewster, in his most dignified manner, in which it may be said that there was more starch than real dignity.

"I hope there is no real danger," Aureola said, as she was being propelled forward at a varying pace, owing to the wilfulness of her cavalier's skates.

"None in the least," he said. "Mr. Power is one of your knowing gentlemen who like to make a fuss wherever they go."

"He is generally considered very quiet."

"But he has not been very quiet to-day."

"Perhaps not; but are you not in the dangerous part?"

"Yes, and as you perceive there is not the least—"

Crack! smash! and Aureola found herself in the midst of broken ice and bubbling water, with a full view of David Brewster clinging frantically to the chair, and entirely absorbed in attending to his personal safety.

She was a plucky girl, but she understood her peril, and felt her heart sink within her. She was young, and life was far too pleasant for her to let it slip away from her if she could help it, and she gave vent to a cry for assistance.

It was yet on her lips when the aid she needed came.

Charlton Power came flying up, plunged in, and threw his arm around her.

"Don't be alarmed, Miss Harman," he said, "the water is not so deep a few yards away, and I can fight my way to it. Keep a good grip on that chair, Brewster, and I'll come back for you."

"Oh, don't leave me," gasped Brewster, piteously, "save us both."

But Charlton only repeated his former advice, and manfully breaking his way through the ice soon landed safely, and handed his lovely burden somewhat unwillingly to Sir Horace.

"Take her home at once," he said, "or she may get a serious chill."

"Oh, don't think of me," murmured Aureola, "I am not worthy of any one's thought."

A pressure of the hand was his rejoinder, and bidding Everard stand by in case he should be wanted, Charlton plunged in again and, laying violent hands upon the gallant Brewster, brought him chair and all to land.

"This will be my death," murmured he.

"Off with your skates," said Charlton, "and run to the Chyne as fast as you can. Everard, you cut out the pace for us until we reach the others. Sir Horace and the man are fairly racing home with Aureola in a chair."

It was not long before they overtook the first party, and Charlton insisted upon helping to carry Aureola. She demurred warmly, and bade him go on for fear of catching cold.

"I never catch a cold, or rather a cold never catches me," he said.

"If you won't go on," she said, "I must run with you," and slipping from her chair she took his proffered arm, and they all ran back to the Chyne together.

"If you please, Sir Horace, Mr. Brewster thinks he had better stop in bed, and he begs to be excused."

"Very well," replied Sir Horace, "let dinner be served."

The butler made his bow and went off to give the cook the necessary order. During the short wait Charlton, who was sitting beside Aureola, improved the occasion.

"You will never be unkind to me again?" he said.

"Never," she replied, adding, after a moment's thought, "unless you give me cause."

"That's a woman's reservation," he said, "and I forgive it."

"Very hard you are," she said, with a bow, "but now tell me why you did not come near the Chyne for three whole days."

"Oh! I was hipped."

"Hipped! Nonsense, you were out of temper."

"Well, I fancy I was, Aureola, but it was all the fault of that beggar Brewster, who put all sorts of things into my head."

"What things?"

"How inquisitive you are."

"I insist upon hearing."

"If you insist, there's an end of it, Aureola."

He told me you were fishing for a husband—had fished for him, and were fishing for me. I am sorry—"

"Sorry, Charlton? Why should you be? Fishing, of course I was. But I did not cast my line at Mr. Brewster. I fished for you, and I have caught you. If you think you are not worth having, say so, and I will throw you into the waters of a loveless life again."

"Don't do that, Aureola. No fish ever experienced such pleasure at being caught as I."

"You are sure you don't repent of what you said this afternoon?" she asked. "It is not too late to retract."

"I would not recall it for the wealth of Persia," replied Charlton, looking earnestly into her deep blue eyes.

They had forgotten they were not alone, and there is no knowing how far they might have gone in love's dalliance if the butler had not announced dinner in a sonorous voice, which was to them what the blast of the trumpet was to the Sleeping Beauty—they awoke to consciousness, and returned to the world, and, it may be added, made an excellent dinner.

David Brewster had some gruel in bed, and the housekeeper of the Chyne, a kindly old dame, brought it to him. While he was partaking of it she sat down by the side of the bed and cheerfully chatted on various things.

She had something to tell him, and by-and-bye she worked her way to it. Already every servant in the house knew that Charlton Power had proposed to Aureola Harman and been

accepted, and that was the news she had to tell.

"A very pretty pair they will make," she said, meditatively.

"They! Who?" asked David Brewster.

"Mr. Power and Miss Harman," replied the dame. "But I daresay you could see it was coming all along—we could."

"Do you mean to say that he's done it already?" said the invalid, in a state of fixed amazement, "or are you only surmising?"

"Proposed in the drawing-room this afternoon after they had changed their clothes," said the housekeeper, complacently, "and two doves is nothing to them."

David Brewster muttered something between his teeth, and it was a fortunate thing the housekeeper did not hear it, as she was included in a general anathema. Pushing away his gruel, he said he could eat no more, and would like to go to sleep.

The housekeeper removed the tray and kept a placid face until she was out of the room. Then she beamed with a smile of triumph.

"And I'd have stopped it myself before you should have had her," she said, with a meaning look at the door of the room where David Brewster lay grinding his teeth and confounding the happy pair below. "Ay! that I would somehow. But I never thought she was such a fool as to think of you."

The next morning David Brewster left the chryse and came back to it no more. He changed his politics, and violently opposed Sir Horace Werner at the election, but the baronet came off triumphant, and then his quondam friend and enemy sold what property he had in the neighbourhood, down to the Water Meadow, which Charlton Power bought, and left the neighbourhood for good.

He was not missed, and after a time the young married people, absorbed in their happiness, entirely forgot him.

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

A QUEER SHAVER—A DIALOGUE.—Barber: "How long ago did you have your hair cut?"—Customer: "Oh, about three months ago."—Barber: "Awful bad cut, who cut it?"—Customer: "You did." Silence of ten minutes.—Barber, resuming: "I see that your chin has been cut by the last barber that shaved you."—Customer: "Yes."—Barber: "You ought to have built a head on him bigger'n a mule!"—Customer: "I did." The barber continued to shave in silence with extreme care.

OLD PARR.—Thomas Parr was born at Winington, in the parish of Alberbury, Shropshire, in 1483. His father, John Parr, was an agricultural labourer, and Thomas followed the same occupation. At the age of eighty he married his first wife, and about eight years after her death, when he was 120 years old, he married for the second time. Having in 1635 attained the wonderful age of 152 years and upwards he was visited by the Earl of Arundel, the owner of estates in Shropshire, who was curious to see him. The earl was so impressed that he brought Parr to London. Partly owing to the fatigue of the journey, partly to the crowds that flocked to see him, and particularly to the changed mode of life which he led, Parr soon fell ill and died. He was buried November 15, 1635, in Westminster Abbey, where a monument was erected to his memory. After death his body was examined by the celebrated Dr. Harvey, who found it remarkably stout and healthy, without any trace of decay or organic disease; so that had it not been for his altered way of living he might have reached even a greater age. The chief authority for Parr's life is a pamphlet by John Taylor, the "water poet." Taylor relates that Parr, at the age of 105, was obliged to do penance in a white sheet at the door of the parish church at Alberbury.

When presented to Charles the First at Court, that monarch said to him, "You have lived longer than other men, what have you done more than other men?" to which Old Parr replied, "I did penance when I was a hundred years old." Taylor says:

He entertained no gout, no ache he felt,
The air was good and temperate where he dwelt;
While mavis and sweet-tongued nightingales
Did chant him roundels and madrigals.
Thus living within bounds of nature's laws,
Of his long-lasting life may be some cause.

Of course he had a peculiar and wonderful constitution as well. Robert Parr, his grandson, was born at Kinver, in 1693, and died in 1757, at the age of 124 years. In the "Gentleman's Magazine" for 1814 there is a view of Old Parr's cottage near Alberbury.

A CHILDREN'S CRUSADE.—Some of the best witnesses for the history of the middle ages confirm that, seduced by the preaching of fanatics, the children of France and Germany, about the year 1213, thought themselves authorised by Heaven to attempt a crusade. Boys and girls stole from their homes, no bolts, no bars, no fear of father or love of mother could hold them back, and the number of youthful converts was thirty thousand. They were organised by some fanatical wretches, one of whom was taken and hanged at Cologne. The children drove down France, crossed the Alps, and those who survived thirst, hunger, and heat, presented themselves at the gates of the seaports of Italy and the south of France. Many were driven back to their homes, but seven large ships full of them went from Marseilles; two of the vessels were wrecked on the isle of St. Peter, the rest of the ships went to Burgundy and Alexandria, and the masters sold the children to slavery. Honest Fuller says: "This crusade was done by the instinct of the devil, who, as it were, desired a cordial of children's blood to comfort his weak stomach, long cloyed with murdering of men."

SAMUEL FOOTE, THE ACTOR.—Foote, the actor, once proprietor of the Haymarket theatre (died 1777), was the pre-eminent humourist of his day. In the autumn of 1777 he disposed of his theatre to Colman, and resolved to try the restorative effects of a visit to France. He arrived at the Ship Inn, Dover, on his way to Calais. Here he is said to have given vent to his last flash of merriment. Going into the kitchen to order a particular dish for dinner, he encountered the cook, who, hearing that he was going to France, boasted that for her part she had never been out of her own country. "Why, cooky," said Foote, "that is very strange, for they tell me upstairs that you have been several times all over Greece." "They may say what they like," she replied, "but I never was ten miles from Dover in my life." "Nay," rejoined Foote, "that must be a fib, for I myself have seen you at Spithhead." The other servants now perceived the joke, and a universal roar pervaded the kitchen. Foote presenting them with a crown to drink his health and a prosperous voyage. On this he was destined never to embark, being seized the next morning with a succession of shivering fits, of which he expired in the course of a few hours, at the age of fifty-seven. His body was interred in Westminster Abbey. He was one of those men who seem to be born to be droll, and whose irresistibly comic powers render it almost impossible to contemplate them in a moral or serious light. Dr. Johnson said of him to Boswell: "The first time I was in company with Foote was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow, I was resolved not to be pleased, and it is very difficult to please me against my will. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him, but the dog was so very comical that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself back in my chair, and fairly laugh it out. Sir, he was irresistible." . . . Foote's mother bore a strong resemblance to her son, both in person and disposition. From her he inherited his misanthropic and his extravagant propensities. She was often embarrassed for money. On one occasion she wrote to Foote: "Dear Sam, I am in prison for debt; come and assist your loving mother, E. Foote." To this brief note he re-

plied: "Dear Mother, so am I, which prevents his duty being paid to his loving mother by her affectionate son, Sam. Foote. P.S. I have sent my attorney to assist you; in the meantime let us hope for better days." Foote allowed his mother a hundred a year.

DUTCH LADIES' HEAD-DRESSES.—The females of North Holland are particularly distinguished by their beauty, by the remarkable clearness of their complexions, and by the neatness and gracefulness of their costumes, which is almost peculiar to the district. The back of the head is encircled by a broad fillet of pure gold, shaped like a horseshoe, which confines the hair and terminates on each side of the temple in two large rosettes, also of pure gold, suspended somewhat like blinkers before the eyes of a horse; over this is worn a cape or veil of the finest and richest lace, with lappets hanging down the neck; and a pair of enormous gold earrings. These ornaments are often of real gold, even among the lower classes, and the cost of them is considerable. Great sacrifices are made to purchase them, and they are considered heirlooms in a family. In a church at Alkmaar three hundred of these head-dresses may be seen at once, on Sunday.

BOAT LIFE IN HOLLAND.—A portion of the poorer inhabitants live entirely in the cellars of the houses. There is also a class who live constantly upon the canals, making their vessels their home. In this and in many other respects the Dutch bear a strong resemblance to the Chinese. Like that industrious and economical race, they keep their hogs, their ducks, and other domestic animals, constantly on board. Their cabins display the same neatness as the parlours of their countrymen on shore; the women employ themselves in all the domestic offices, and are assiduous in embellishing their little sitting-rooms with the labours of the needle, and many of them have little gardens of tulips, hyacinths, anemones, and various other flowers. Some of these vessels are of great length, but generally narrow, suitable to the canals and sluices of the towns. This mode of living is a good example of Dutch industry and thrift. A man marries. He and his wife possess or purchase a small boat that will carry one to three tons. They live and cook on board, move about, carry articles to and from markets; and their first, if not second, child is born, or at least nursed, in this puny vessel. The wife nurses the children, mends, and often makes, all the family clothes, cooks, and assists in navigating the craft, especially in steering; when you may at the same time observe the husband with a rope over his shoulder, dragging the boat along a canal or river when the wind is adverse. In process of time they buy a larger vessel, probably of six or seven tons, and, if the smaller one be not unfit for use, sell it to a young beginning couple. In the second vessel their family grows, until they are probably strong enough to manage together, with perhaps an additional hand or two, one of those large vessels carrying from 200 to 400 tons, called Rhine boats, on board of all which the population live in the manner described.

PRINCE CHARLES EDWARD STUART.—The unfortunate "Young Pretender" latterly gave himself up to wine, and this failing, it appears, preserved our country from a third attempt to restore the Stuarts to the British throne. "I know from high authority," says Sir N. W. Wraxall, in his Historical Memoirs, "that as late as the year 1770 the Duke de Choiseul, then first minister of France, not deterred by the ill success of the attempts made in 1715 and 1745, meditated to undertake a third effort for restoring the House of Stuart. His enterprising spirit let him to profit by the dispute which arose between the English and Spanish crowns respecting the possession of Falkland Island, in order to accomplish the object. As the first step necessary towards it, he despatched a private emissary to Rome, who signified to Charles Edward Choiseul's desire of seeing him immediately at Paris. He complied, and arrived in that city with the utmost privacy. The minister fixed the same night, at twelve o'clock, when he

and the Marshal de Broglie would be ready to receive the Pretender, and to lay before him their plan for an invasion of England. The Hotel de Choiseul was named for the interview, to which place he was enjoined to repair in a hackney coach, disguised, and without any attendant. At the appointed time the duke and the marshal, furnished with the requisite papers and instructions drawn up for his conduct on the expedition, were ready, but, after waiting a full hour expecting his appearance every instant, when the clock struck one they concluded that some unforeseen accident must have intervened to prevent his arrival. Under this impression, they were preparing to separate, when the noise of wheels was heard in the court yard, and a few moments afterwards the Pretender entered the room in a state of such intoxication as to be utterly incapable of ordinary conversation. Disgusted, as well as indignant at the disgraceful conduct, and well convinced that no expedition undertaken for the restoration of a man so lost to every sense of decency or self-interest could be crowned with success, Choiseul, without hesitation, sent him the next morning a peremptory order to quit the French dominions. The Pretender returned to Italy, where he experienced every mortification, and ended his inglorious career in January, 1788, at Florence, as his grandfather, King James the Second, had done in 1701, at the palace of St. Germain, near Paris.

"BISHOP BANDSTRINGS."—According to Lord Fountainhill's Diary (which is preserved in the Advocate's Library at Edinburgh, and contains many highly curious notes on Scottish affairs from 1680 to 1701) Dr. Paterson, Bishop of Edinburgh, was upbraided in the popular lampoons as a very "loose fish." He is said to have kissed the bandstrings in the pulpit, in the midst of a discourse, which was the signal agreed on betwixt him and a lady to whom he was suitor, to show he could think upon her charms, even while engaged in the most solemn duties of his profession. Hence he was nicknamed Bishop Bandstrings.

PRESENCE OF MIND.—There is nothing like presence of mind after all. The other day, during a tremendous shower, a gentleman entered a fashionable West End club, bearing a splendid ivory-handled silk umbrella, which he placed on the stand. Instantly another gentleman, who was mourning the abstraction of just such an article, jumped up. "Will you allow me to look at that?" he said, sternly. "Certainly," said the umbrella-carrier, "I was just taking it to the police-station. It was left in my house last night by a burglar whom we frightened off. I hope it will prove a first-rate clue." And though the exasperated owner could plainly see where his name had been scratched off the handle he sat down and changed the subject.

HOARDED TREASURES.—The custom of burying money, remarks the "Book of Days," belongs rather to a rude or a disturbed state of society. Where matters are more systematic and peaceful spare cash can always be made to yield interest. On April 10, 1843, eight labourers were employed in grubbing up trees at Tuffnell Park, near Highgate, and during their labours they lighted upon two jars containing nearly four hundred sovereigns in gold. They divided the money, and one of them spent his share; but soon afterwards Mr. Tuffnell, one of the lords of the manor, claimed the whole of it as "treasure trove." There is a complex law, partly statute and partly civil, relating to the recovery of treasure for which the original owner does not apply, and, according to the circumstances of the finding, the property belongs to the Crown, to the lord of the manor, or to the finder, or to two out of these three. While the eight labourers were anxiously puzzling over Mr. Tuffnell's claim the real owner stepped forward and told a singular tale. He was a brassfounder living in Clerkenwell, and being, about nine months before, under a temporary delusion, he one night took out two jars of sovereigns with him, and buried them in the field at Tuffnell Park. Being able to prove these facts, his claim to the money was admitted.

In other cases the burying of treasure results, not from any delusion, but from the ignorance of the owner as to any better mode of securing it. In 1820 some labouring men, on clearing out a ditch at Bristol, found a number of guineas and half-guineas and a silver snuffbox. Some time after a sailor was seen to be disconsolately grubbing at that spot, and on inquiry it appeared that, before starting on his last voyage, he had hidden behind the ditch his few worldly treasures, and had cut a notch in a tree to denote the spot. The French Revolution was fruitful in instances of buried treasure, some of which occurred in our own country—as in January, 1836, at Great Stanmore.

FACETIÆ.

AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS REQUIRED FOR DIGGING POTATOES IN MAYO.—Two field pieces. Punch.

"ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN."

BRIGSON (at last winging a pheasant, after missing right and left all day): "Ah, ha! Knocked him over that time, Jenkins."

KEEPER: "Yes, sir; they will fly into it sometimes!" Punch.

AN IRISH LAND QUESTION.

SOME difference of opinion prevails in Ireland as to the accuracy of "Griffith's Valuation." Some landowners may ask in a tone implying not curiosity, but cavil, "Who's Griffiths?" but it is only a small minority who reply "Not a safe man." Punch.

THE WIND TO GET AT ONE'S BONES.—The Graw-Easter. Punch.

TIMES-SERVING.—The newsmen.

Funny Folks.

THE EXACT OPPOSITE TO "VITAL WARMTH."—A dead heat. Funny Folks.

OBVIOUSLY.

The general opinion is that "the good time coming" is a good time coming.

Funny Folks.

A POLE-TRY SHOW.—The relics of the Franklin Arctic Expedition. Funny Folks.

BLOOD RELATIONS.—Leeches.

Funny Folks.

COMPARISONS ARE SUGGESTIVE.

BUTCHER: "Hardly knew you, as you passed this morning in uniform. Never saw you in it before."

LIEUTENANT: "Dessay not. Of course we never wear the beastly thing off duty."

BUTCHER: "Just like me, sir. I'm always glad to get out o' my butchering clothes!"

Funny Folks.

GOING A LITTLE TOO FAR. (A FACT.)

ÆSTHETIC LADY OF THE HOUSE (to Civil Service Tenor): "Will you not favour us with a song, Mr. Topkins?"

C. S. T.: "You must excuse me, I fear. I never sing in a room without a dado!"

—Moonshine.

WIFE (reading): "'The Land League has given instructions not to pay rents except according to Griffiths's valuation.' Who's Griffiths, then?"

HUSBAND: "Well, you know they shoot landlords who won't take their rent by Griffiths's valuation."

WIFE: "Yes, I know. But who's Griffiths?"

HUSBAND: "Griffiths! Well, 'Griffiths is the safe man'—fireproof, you know."

Moonshine.

AN INSULT (A FACT.)

IRISH M.P. (who, in the fulness of his heart—and as it is a cold night—has offered cabby a glass of whisky): "Scotch, yiz say! Ye'd rather have Scotch, wud yez? Is that the way yiz insult an Irish gentleman?" Moonshine.

USELESS VIOLENCE.—Striking an attitude. Moonshine.

THE FRUIT OF INTEMPERANCE.—A "strawberry" nose. Moonshine.

ORNITHOLOGICAL.—A correspondent has been writing to a contemporary that numbers of swallows were seen flying about Silvertown and the Albert Docks as late as the 9th inst., but on that day they all disappeared. Might not the Guildhall banquet have had something to do with this? There were plenty of swallows there. Moonshine.

A SPARKLING DRINK.—Double diamond. Moonshine.

ADVANCED VIEWS.

YOUNG LADY: "Good morning, Mrs. Parkins. How does your husband get on with his reading? Does he still do his Bible chapter every day?"

MRS. P.: "Bible, miss! Lor', bless you, he's long beyond that, he's got to the noospaper." Moonshine.

DELIGHTFUL NOVELTY.—A walking match. Moonshine.

THE BONE OF CONTENTION.—The jaw-bone. Moonshine.

A BURNING QUESTION.—How would you cremate a dustman, eh? Moonshine.

SUFFERING YOUTHS.—Stew-dents. Moonshine.

A GRAVE-YARD.—Seriously, thirty-six inches. Moonshine.

THE SMALLEST MAN IN THE WORLD.—A foot-man. Moonshine.

THE CITY PRESS.—On Lord Mayor's Show-day. Moonshine.

QUESTION.—As the new Lord Mayor is a staunch teetotaliser, does he literally pass the loving cup? Moonshine.

ALPHABET IS BETTER THAN NO BET.—(A study for beginners.)—A bee seedy he effigy a shy jay kale em an hope he cue arrest tea you've double ewe ex-wise head. Moonshine.

A PRUITFUL "APPLEY" CATION.

THE MAN who ate his words said they were most luscious and juicy—being, in fact, each one of them a part of his (s)peach. —Fun.

THE ART OF POLITENESS.

HOSTESS: "Now, Reginald, dear, what would you like—a piece of cake?"

REGINALD: "Yes."

HOSTESS: "Yes, if you— Yes, if you what?"

REGINALD: "Yes, if you like." Fun.

WHY are all vessels cruising between the Isle of Wight and the Hampshire coast to be avoided?—Because they are always in Solent. Fun.

PALMISTRY.

CAN one foretell the destination of a claqueur at the conclusion of a theatrical performance?—Yes, if he raises his hands it is evident he is going to Clap'em. Fun.

A QUESTION OF STRENGTH.

WHEN is a man possessed of irresistible strength?—When he is armed with dynamite! Fun.

WINE NOT.

SURELY "tapping his claret" was a comparatively simple matter when every brave knight wore his "casque" on his head. Fun.

ANOTHER PERVERTER OF THE TRUTH.

REFRESHIST: "Goin' to fetsch a dropsh o' beer, old woman? That's right."

WIFE: "Yes, but not for you; you said you were going to take the pledge this morning."

REFRESHIST: "Yesh, I have been round to the Good Templarsh Lodgesh this mornin', but they ain't got a wacancy till after Christmash." Fun.



[POLITE ATTENTIONS.]

THE FAIR ARCHER: WHAT SHE WON AND WHAT SHE LOST.

It was a great sensation for so small a village, nothing like it has been known for a generation, and when Isabel Anderson went singing past her chamber window "There are no birds in last year's nest," just as the Widow Bellamy was passing the house, the little widow took it as a personal affront, so wrought up were everybody's feelings.

The Widow Bellamy—Eleanor Kirkham that was—seemed to belong to the village. She had been born there, and had grown up in its midst; had married Charles Bellamy, whom everybody knew and loved; and when poor Charlie had been taken off suddenly with rheumatism of the heart everybody had mourned him and had said—for the village was given to speaking its mind—that Charlie had done just right, it was just like him, in fact, to leave his wife everything, from the fine old Bellamy homestead down to his fancy game-cock and thorough-bred pointers.

That was the village verdict, but even in Camperdown there was a family who thought differently. Charlie Bellamy's sister had married a Mr. Anderson, and she was a widow now, with grown-up children. In straightened circumstances too, when we consider what it costs to keep a family of five going in these expensive

times; and Mrs. Anderson felt that if her brother had left her the homestead, which had been her home in girlhood, it was as little as he could have been expected to do for his only sister and her children.

To be sure, she was living in a house of her own as good as the Bellamy place, but it would have been easy to rent or sell that; and, besides the associations, the ready money would have been so helpful just now, when Isabel was in society, and Annie was at boarding-school, and John was away at that expensive college preparing for a profession, at which for the next five years he couldn't be expected to earn much.

Mrs. Anderson didn't say a great deal about all this except to her intimate friends, but to them she did confide that she thought it hard.

There was one saving clause, however, to the will. There was no restriction whatever upon the fair Eleanor marrying again—there never was anything mean about Charlie—but it was provided that if she died without heirs direct, while the personal property was wholly in her power, the Bellamy place would revert to Mrs. Anderson's children.

Eleanor Bellamy was only twenty-six, and of course the prospect was that she would marry again and raise a brood of children to inherit the Bellamy acres. And that prospective possibility was a perpetually rankling thorn in Mrs. Anderson's bosom.

For the first two years of Eleanor's widowhood things went on as smoothly as could be desired. Eleanor herself was a model of discretion;

wore weeds of the most unexceptional length and breadth and thickness; saw no one but her intimate friends; went nowhere but to church, except to visit the poor, to whom her alms were liberal. All the village pointed to her with pride as an instance of true and proper widowhood.

But, being still young and fair to look upon, and the life, if she chose to be, of all social entertainments, society was not disposed to approve of a too lengthy sacrifice of its favourite upon the altar of wifely devotion. So the third year the gentlemen protested, with the minister at their head, and the girls got about her, with the matrons looking on in smiling approval, and fairly, so to speak, pulled off her weeds.

Eleanor resisted as well as she might, but it ended in her toning down her crape and bombazine to black silk and tulle. Her widow's cap she couldn't be induced to part with, and as it was in fact only too becoming nobody really wondered. She came at first to sewing-societies and church socials, and at last by degrees to afternoon teas, and before the winter was over she was fairly though most decorously launched once more upon the bosom of the social deep.

And a very pretty craft the little widow was, if the truth must be told; and more than one gentleman not only thought so in his inner heart but might be heard to express the opinion. There were even not wanting those who put forth careful feelers in her direction, hoping that perchance the little widow's heart might not be wholly inensible to their attractions; but Eleanor was discretion itself, and managed, without offending anybody, to keep all her suitors at arm's length. And again the village pointed to her with pride as a model of propriety.

But there came a crisis. The perverse fates could not possibly look on such a situation, I suppose, without a desire to muddle it, and so they sent to the village—which was, in its way, a very pleasant summer resort, and so known to several of the very best families in several surrounding cities, though they kept the knowledge confined within prudent bounds—Mr. Algernon St. Cyr.

But this was not the sensation to which I alluded at the beginning of this story—at least it was only the beginning of it. The village was cosmopolitan by reason of its associations, and had a certain well-grounded dignity of its own which it could always fall back upon when occasions demanded, and it was not in the power of any magnate, however wealthy or distinguished he might be, wholly to disturb this otium cum dignitate.

When the village was rocked from centre to circumference it was very certain that the doings or misdoings of some one or more of its own people were at the bottom of it. So, though Mr. St. Cyr was of foreign extraction and allied to nobility, and the guest in this country of the Gerrums, who everybody knew were connected by marriage with several foreign families of distinction, the village bore his presence with great equanimity, giving scarcely more than the customary number of dinners and teas in his honour—till something happened!

That something was that Mr. Algernon St. Cyr and Eleanor Bellamy went out horseback riding together!

There was really nothing remarkable in the circumstance, if people didn't choose to think there was. Horseback riding had been one of Eleanor's favourite pastimes in her youth. Many was the ride she and Charlie Bellamy had taken together during the halcyon days of their courtship, and one of Charlie's first gifts to his pretty young wife had been a beautiful Arabian horse, named Saladin, with a saddle of blue velvet and all the necessary appointments.

For some years Saladin had been neglected, or used only for the somewhat unromantic purpose of drawing a phaeton, but there was still a good deal of fire in his eye, and Eleanor knew very well that he was good under the saddle for many a gay gallop on the road and many a leap over fence and ditch in a cross-country scamper. So when Mr. Algernon St. Cyr delivered himself in her presence of a faint wonder that so

noble an animal should be doomed to pass an ignoble life in harness, Eleanor gayly challenged him to a race, and appointed time and starting-point forthwith.

They had a grand canter over the Camperdown meadows, coming home through the woods, and Mr. St. Cyr bowed his thanks when he had lifted her down from the saddle at her own door; and that, so far as these two knew or cared, was the end of it.

The end indeed! It was only the beginning!

From the windows of her Camperdown mansion Mrs. Anderson had espied the pair, and her excitement knew no bounds.

"Isabel," she cried, "do come here and tell me if my eyes deceive me. Is not that Mrs. Charles Bellamy and Mr. Algernon St. Cyr out horseback riding together?"

Isabel came, and at once confirmed her mother's judgment.

Mrs. Anderson wiped her eyes with her handkerchief; she was a weeping philosopher.

"Ah, me!" she said, "how that sight recalls the days of my poor brother Charles's courtship. If it has gone that far with them, you may be sure that our chances for the reversion of the Bellamy place are slight. If it had not been for her horseback riding, Eleanor Kirkham never would have caught my poor brother."

"Well," said Isabel, smartly, "you take it very coolly. For my part, I think it is time we were up and doing. I shall go over and spend a week with Aunt Charlotte at the village directly."

"I wish you could," said Mrs. Anderson. "I am sure I could trust your ability and your devotion to the family interest to open Mr. St. Cyr's eyes, and let him see what he is doing."

"Humph!" said Isabel; "he is probably amusing himself just now. But we all know the danger when a man puts himself in the way of a woman like Eleanor Bellamy."

"But it is rather hard for you," said Mrs. Anderson, "to have to leave home just now when your relations with Mr. Howell are so critical. I expected he would propose the last time he was here, surely, and he is such a good match."

"Well," said Isabel, wisely, "I don't think it bad policy to go away just now. He will see that I am not devoting myself wholly to him; and then if he should follow me, as I hope he will, it will show people in the village that there are good matches to be found outside its society. They've held up their heads over Camperdown long enough. Besides, I'd even risk my chances with Mr. Howell for the sake of taking Aunt Eleanor down. Mrs. Algernon St. Cyr—think of that!"

"Yes," said her astute mamma; "and there's no knowing what may happen. If he's on the lookout for a wife, why, you are younger, and, if I must say it, prettier than Eleanor, and of a better family by far, and if the man has sense he may see it."

"Nonsense," said Isabel, tossing her head with a pleased smile. "I don't really suppose the man means to marry any of us, but if I can't out Eleanor Bellamy out I'll never try my hand again. Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to get up an archery club over there. It's so fashionable, and I'd like to see Aunt Eleanor draw a bow beside me;" and Miss Isabel straightened up her tall and handsome figure and held her head in as haughty a pose as Diana herself.

"Isabel," said her mother, with deep impressiveness, "you have decided ability. Your archery club is the very card to play against Eleanor's equestrianism. I am proud of you, my daughter."

Miss Anderson bought an archery costume that very day, and practised zealously with her bow. She was a good figure for the sport, and had the strength and the nerve to make a good shot; whereas the little widow was undeniably too petite, and altogether of too dainty a turn, to look well on the archery ground.

It was quite a new sensation at the village when Miss Anderson appeared at her Aunt Charlotte Trimble's for a week's visit and announced her intention of forming an archery

club. She knew the village very well, so she began with flattery.

"We never can do these things well over in Camperdown," she said. "We are not sufficiently cosmopolitan to take to new ideas kindly. The village always leads us, of course, but then I do think we play a very respectable second. And this time too, while you have Mr. St. Cyr with you, is, I am sure, the golden opportunity."

So a meeting was appointed at Mrs. Trimble's at once, after the fashion of the village, which was truly Athenian in its spirit when any new project was mooted. All the desirable people attended it, and Miss Anderson was quite the heroine of the hour.

A club with all the proper officers was formed on the spot. Mr. St. Cyr's advice was had concerning the best make of weapons, and a liberal order for bows and targets and all the wonted paraphernalia was sent to the nearest city. Things were going on swimmingly for Miss Anderson. To add to her satisfaction Mr. Howell very shortly appeared upon the scene, and was at once tacitly recognised as her adorer; and as he was decidedly a catch, and as she was able to say that they were not engaged—no! she had never thought of such a thing—she had all the glory of the conquest and her freedom besides, which, under the circumstances, was the best that she could desire.

Meantime she was getting in a good many telling blows against her Aunt Eleanor.

"She is my aunt—by marriage," she had said to Mr. St. Cyr, "and of course I must recognise the fact; but the truth is, she was very little thought of till she married my uncle, and she never would have caught him if it had not been for her dashing horseback riding. Now I can ride perhaps as well as Mrs. Bellamy, but I never care to advertise the fact, while Saladin and his blue velvet saddle are the cards that she regularly plays upon strangers."

Mr. St. Cyr thought this a rather amazing speech. But Miss Anderson amused him, and he lent himself to the sensation of the hour.

Meantime the little widow was not a wholly uninterested spectator of the game. She understood Miss Anderson perfectly, but, being quite used to her airs, took no offence at them, at least manifested none, but pursued the even tenor of her way without flinching. It was evident that she would never be a star archer, but that fact did not disturb her gentle soul, neither did she display any pique concerning the success of Miss Anderson's plans or throw a single straw in the way of their achievement. In respect of her archery, she was quite on a par with Mr. Howell, who, though a tolerable shot, took no particular interest in the sport, but preferred a quiet chat to all the sports of the field.

Mrs. Bellamy found this out at the very first tournament—Miss Anderson had explained that tournament was the proper word—from the simple fact that while everybody else was carried away with the sport they two were left upon the piazza, which indeed overlooked the scene quite fairly, and their absence was wholly unnoticed.

Apocryphal of archery they got talking of Scott's novels, then of Froude, and so around to ritualism and church spectacles, and thence to the influence of woman, and had begun to feel quite at home with each other, before Mrs. Bellamy, who had kept her eye upon the group below them, saw signs of a dissolution, and felt that it was time for them to break up their tête-à-tête before it should be remarked.

She had the tact then to send Mr. Howell to one side of the busy, buzzing group of archers, while she approached it from the other, so that the most astute among them never noticed that there had been a tête-à-tête at all! Or if Mr. St. Cyr did notice it, he thought so little of it that he might as well have had no eyes. He was very busy handing Miss Anderson her arrows, and had just then no thought of anybody else.

For Mr. St. Cyr, with an idle man's inconsequence, was amusing himself just now with Miss Anderson. When the shooting was over and refreshments were served, he was still by

her side, and Mr. Howell was obliged to make himself agreeable to a young lady in a white muslin dress and long curls, quite the style of young lady that he did not admire.

Mrs. Trimble noticed this, and said to her niece:

"Isabel, it seems to me that you are neglecting Mr. Howell. I'd pay him rather more attention if I were in your place."

But Miss Anderson's head was a little turned. Beside Mr. St. Cyr, Mr. Howell seemed tame and commonplace. She had not yet thoroughly learned, as her aunt had, that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Still, when it came time to go home, she accepted Mr. Howell's escort, and was very sweet to him all the way.

"You have had a pleasant evening, I judge?" he said.

"Yes, indeed; have not you?"

"Oh, yes; archery rather bores me, of course; that is, if I am to test my own skill; but, standing apart, I quite enjoyed it. You made a very pretty group I assure you."

He had been admiring her, then, from a distance! What fidelity! She had little idea that his admiration of her had been but an underthought to his pleasant interview with Mrs. Bellamy.

"Do you like Mr. St. Cyr?" he asked, quite coolly.

"Yes, in a way, certainly. I like him to hand me my arrows, because he understands what I need. But I must tell you a little secret. You will not mind my being confidential with you, will you? I am rescuing Mr. St. Cyr from my Aunt Eleanor! She had her toils set for him, I am persuaded, and she is such a designing person. And you know if she marries and has children, we lose the reversion of the Bellamy place; and mamma can't bear the idea, for it was her old home, and then the estate is of value."

"I see," said Mr. Howell, dryly.

Perhaps it occurred to him that in this little comedy, which he was perfectly capable of appreciating, there was more than one designing woman—if, indeed, Mrs. Bellamy had designs, which he did not half believe. But he very prudently held his tongue on that subject.

It is not to be supposed that Mrs. Bellamy was wholly unaware of the tactics of her niece. Indeed the web of this oily Arachne seemed to her quite transparent. It rather amused her than otherwise, and, being an old chess-player, she knew well that the best defence is often an aggression. It was very true that she could never distinguish herself at archery, but it was also true that there are more ways than one to keep oneself in the forefront of the battle where honours are thickest. The archery club was of course nothing unless it was entertained and offered an opportunity to display itself.

Though there were plenty of spacious and commodious houses in the village, it happened that few of them had grounds so well calculated for the purposes of archery as the Bellamy place. Mrs. Bellamy, therefore, with the sweetest grace in the world, invited the archery club to set up its target on her spacious lawn and shoot there at will.

"And when you are ready for a trial of skill with the Camperdown Club"—for Camperdown had a club by this time—"I will invite them over to meet you, and we will have a tournament that shall be a regular Field of the Cloth of Gold—that is modern gold."

"You evidently think," said Mr. Howell, laughing, "that the ancient metal was the finer of the two."

"Well," she replied, with equal gaiety, "you know what Tom Hughes says about the gilt gingerbread of the Fairs of his youth; that if the old worthies who ate of it could be dug up from their deep graves, more gold would be found among their dust than would serve to gild all the cake in a Fair in these degenerate days. I fear I agree with him only too well concerning the apostasy of our times."

So the archery club practised upon Mrs. Bellamy's lawn, and talked of the coming tournament; and Mr. St. Cyr, who was too much of a man of the world not to have some idea of

what was going on, quietly observed to himself that in some respects human nature was much alike the world over.

When the village was quite satisfied with its own progress in archery it challenged Camperdown. The meet was to be on Mrs. Bellamy's lawn, and that worthy and hospitable lady made quite remarkable preparations for the event. Mr. Howell had gone back to Camperdown with Miss Anderson, but it became necessary for him to drive over to the village quite frequently on various errands connected with the business of the club.

He had not yet proposed to Miss Anderson, and that young lady's mamma was getting somewhat uneasy on the subject, but nobody else thought that there was the slightest doubt concerning his ultimate intentions. He made himself very much at home with that young lady's relatives, and visited Mrs. Bellamy quite as though he considered himself already related to her. He never paid her any particular attention when they were out together, especially if Miss Anderson were present; but he was there a good deal, which was natural enough, considering that it was, so to speak, the headquarters of the club.

Meantime Mr. St. Cyr's attentions to Miss Anderson were growing quite noticeable. Nobody thought any more of his being in the slightest degree attracted by the Widow Bellamy, and the village—which knew well enough the ways of the world not to take quickly to false alarms—said that really it did look as though Mr. St. Cyr might be in earnest; and Isabel was so elated with what she considered her triumph over her Aunt Eleanor that she was less quick-sighted than usual.

"It would be so nice, mamma," she said, "if I should go abroad to live and you could come to see me; and who knows what it might do for Anne, who really is growing up very pretty? But I must have a new cashmere for this tournament, and it must be something thoroughly 'chic' and becoming."

"I'm sure I don't know where the money is coming from," said Mrs. Anderson. "I think this St. Cyr business is a delusion, and I'm sorry that you ever took up archery. It has been very expensive, and I can see plainly that it bores Mr. Howell, and he is so unexceptionable. A fine old family, plenty of money, and an excellent character. Really we might better afford to lose the Bellamy place than lose him."

"Well," said the young lady, rather sharply, "who talks of losing him? He is just as devoted as ever. Only last evening he told me, quite with the interest of one of the family, that it would be a shame for the Bellamy place to go out of the family, and he quite accorded with me in the hope that it might not. And I am sure, mamma, when I went over to the village to break up that odious flirtation between Aunt Eleanor and Mr. St. Cyr, you were quite as much in favour of the plan as I was; and now that I have wholly succeeded I'm sure you ought not to blame me."

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Anderson, "I won't blame you. I suppose it is all right—at least I hope so."

And then they went on planning the tournament costume.

In the very midst who should come in but Mr. St. Cyr, announced in due form, of course, by the servant, yet taking the ladies quite by surprise.

Now, truth to tell, Mr. St. Cyr, who was only stopping in this dull little town because of some delay in his remittances and a disinclination to ask help from those fine city friends of his, with whom possibly he was not on quite as intimate terms as the village imagined, had begun to find the place pall upon him, and was determined to set a little sensation afloat.

"Good morning," said Mr. St. Cyr. "Hope you are well this morning. Lovely weather, isn't it? Thought I'd ride over and give you the news; thought you might like to know, you know."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Anderson, very genially,

"Has anything happened? Isabel, dear, Mr. St. Cyr has brought some news."

This last to Isabel, who had retired into the sewing-room, ostensibly to say a word to the dressmaker, but in reality to give her crimps a shake.

"Good morning, Mr. St. Cyr," she said, emerging from the side-room. "I'm sure you are very welcome if you bring us news. Is it about the archery club?"

"Well, not actually," said Mr. St. Cyr, stroking his moustache. "That is, I should say it may concern the archery club indirectly. But, ah! it concerns more nearly some friends of yours."

"Who, pray?" said Isabel. "I'm all impatience. Is it a wedding in prospect?"

"Well, hardly," said the exasperated Mr. St. Cyr. "That is, I can't say that it has gone so far as that yet. In fact I only know that it has reached the stage of the ring."

"Oh," said Isabel, smiling and laying the palms of her hands together in a highly satisfied way. "That is the very most interesting crisis of all. It is an engagement, is it? Pray tell us who are the high contracting parties."

"Now, Miss Isabel, can't you guess?" said Mr. St. Cyr.

"No, I'm sure I can't."

"Well, indeed, it may not be an engagement even. But these are the facts: I happen to have in my possession, or had two days ago, a rather fine diamond—an old mine diamond, as the experts say—that has been in the possession of our family, ah, well, since the time of the Crusades. It is the size, perhaps of a—well, a—cherry stone, you know. It was in an old-fashioned brooch—large enough, you see, to sparkle quite alone on the bosom of beauty. The setting, I suppose, was a hundred years old. My mother took a dislike to the stone because there was a story of blood connected with it. Some Moslem beauty had worn it when she was stabbed by a jealous lover—during the Crusades, you know; an ancestor of mine may or may not have had something to do with the story. At any rate, it had not been reset for a hundred years, and happened only by the merest chance to be in my portmanteau. Mr. Howell was in my room one day, and I was just carelessly showing him a few trifles, and among them the ring. He was charmed with it; manifested such a fairly insane delight with the stone and the story and all, you know, that upon my mentioning my own indifference about it, you know, he made me an offer for it—actually an offer, you know. Well, he was so fairly demented on the subject that I closed with him at once."

"Mr. St. Cyr! And what did he do with the diamond?" exclaimed Isabel, in a transport of excitement.

"He said he should go at once to London and get it reset in a ring as a solitaire; and, in fact, he did leave for town that evening."

Isabel's eyes brightened, and she breathed a trifle more calmly, but, alas! Mr. St. Cyr had not finished his tale.

"And what is the strangest thing, you know," he continued, calmly, "he rode over to the Bellamy place and had an interview with Mrs. Bellamy before he left, and last evening when I called there the servant told me she had gone out of town for a week, and she had a very sagacious look upon her face—I assure you she had. I was so much impressed by the incident that I thought I would just ride over and tell you. You might want to know, you know, and really he has been a good deal in the Bellamy's society of late."

The tumult which this communication raised in the minds of the two women who listened to it is something impossible to describe. Mrs. Anderson was near fainting, and Isabel was as pale as a ghost with mingled anger and mortification. But appearances must be maintained, if possible, before Mr. St. Cyr.

"I am very glad indeed that you told us," said Mrs. Anderson, at length. "You are no doubt aware, Mr. St. Cyr, that the light and altogether reprehensible behaviour of my sister-in-law is a continual trial to us. My poor brother has been dead so short a time, and he

was so foolishly fond of his wife, sacrificing the interests of myself and my family wholly to his devotion to her, that I can but feel deeply pained at the eagerness which she manifests to form another alliance. Isabel, my smelling-salts. This blow is too much for my poor nerves."

Mr. St. Cyr left very soon, and then Isabel, whose nature required that she should give vent to her emotions, put on her bonnet and drove over to the village to retail the news she had heard and gather such confirmation as she might.

In two hours' time she had thrown the village into a state of unexampled ferment.

Long before night everybody had heard the news, and opinions were flying about like straws in a whirlwind. There were those who blamed Mrs. Bellamy and those who laughed at Miss Anderson, and those who cared not a straw for either party, but waited in amused indifference to see how matters turned out.

In the course of two days the story of the St. Cyr diamond had lost all trace of its original proportions, and as Mr. St. Cyr had taken advantage of the successful negotiation to bid a speedy farewell to these rural shades, there was nobody to set matters straight. And before Mr. Howell returned from his absence it was firmly believed that the St. Cyr diamond was as big as a cherry; that it was originally sent from India in the days of Haroun Al Raschid, who presented it to Charlemagne along with the famous clock which was the first known in Europe, that Mr. St. Cyr's grandmother had given it to a lover, whereupon her husband had rescued it at the point of the sword. The current possessor of the gem had always worn it about his person, but Mr. St. Cyr, being haunted by the ghost of his great-grandmother, and believing this stone to be the cause of the visitation—which was the reason, indeed, of his absenting himself from home society and remaining an exile—had disposed of it for a song to Mr. Howell.

Meantime but three days were wanting to the tournament, and neither Mr. Howell nor Mrs. Bellamy had returned, and people were on the point of concluding that they were married and had gone abroad, when fortunately Mr. Howell returned.

He was of course immediately questioned, and his version of the story was simple enough. Mr. St. Cyr had come to him representing that he was in financial difficulties, and desired to sell a fine diamond that he had, and had named a price which seemed moderate. Mr. Howell had agreed to take it, reserving, however, the privilege of consulting his jeweller in London. He had taken the stone to town for this purpose, and, finding it all right, had sent a cheque to Mr. St. Cyr, who had thereupon resumed his travels. But he, Mr. Howell, having other business in London, had remained there a week later. As for Mrs. Bellamy, he had no knowledge whatever of her whereabouts.

This of course partially allayed the excitement, and Miss Anderson was once more all smiles and triumph.

The day of the tournament approached, and Mrs. Bellamy, mindful of her duties as an hostess, wrote a line to her housekeeper, to say that she should be at home in time for that important event. She had been summoned in haste to the bedside of an old friend who was believed to be dying, but, the crisis being over and her friend convalescent, there was no longer anything to detain her.

Accordingly, a day or two before the time fixed for the tournament, she made her appearance.

Meantime the question which agitated society was, what had Mr. Howell done, or what did he intend to do, with the St. Cyr diamond? When the topic came up Mrs. Anderson tossed her head and looked sagacious and pleased; but there were people who had their doubts whether this remarkable stone would ever grace her fair hand. And one and all looked forward to the tournament as an occasion upon which something would be settled.

The day dawned fair and fine, and at the appointed hour of the afternoon the rival clubs

met upon Mrs. Bellamy's lawn. Miss Anderson, in her new costume, was superb; Mrs. Bellamy as hostess was simply dressed, and took no part whatever in the doings of the club.

Mr. Howell was present, but his position was that of a makeweight in the village club.

Nobody expected any brilliant shooting from him, but what did make him the observed of all observers was the fact that on the little finger of his left hand sparkled the wonderful St. Cyr diamond in its new and elegant setting.

Miss Anderson hovered about him like a moth intent upon singeing itself in a flame. He was certainly polite to her, but the most partial observer could not say more than that for her chances.

But of Mrs. Bellamy he seemed to take no notice whatever, so that conjecture was utterly at fault.

I cannot go through all the details of the shooting. Suffice it to say that, owing to Mrs. Bellamy's forethought, all the arrangements were perfect, and the sport was pursued under the most favourable circumstances; and, owing to Miss Anderson's splendid skill, Camperdown won by so slight a margin as to make the village feel that such a defeat was a victory.

"And after all," said Carl Miller, who was the village leader, "none of us could have made the record that we have done if it had not been for the admirable arrangements provided for us by Mrs. Bellamy. I move we make her an honorary member of both clubs as a token of our gratitude for this day's pleasure."

The motion was carried by acclamation, and Mr. Miller and Mr. Howell were appointed a committee to present the compliments and badges of the two clubs to the little widow.

The enthusiasm seemed to have an unwonted effect upon Mrs. Bellamy, for stepping out upon the balcony she bowed her thanks to the group assembled below, with somewhat more than her usual grace and animation.

"A speech!" whispered Mr. Howell at her side. "Give them a speech. You can, I know, and I want you to be as brilliant as you can to-day."

She looked up at him and smiled; and then down upon the group below her, who, catching the tenor of Mr. Howell's whisper, were echoing:

"A speech! A speech!"

"Ladies and gentlemen of the archery clubs," said Mrs. Bellamy, "I am quite too much surprised by these most unexpected and undeserved honours which you have just bestowed upon me, to do more than offer you my most hearty thanks. It is well known to you that I never drew a bow, not even the proverbial *long bow*, which, to listen to the reports of some archery clubs—not those, of course, which I have the honour of addressing—would seem to be the principal weapon known to them. On this occasion you have certainly made a centre shot. In the inmost core of my being," and she clasped her hands rapturously over her heart, "I feel pierced and penetrated by the bright arrows of your esteem. In the privileged language of oratory this is the proudest moment of my life; I shall keep your badges to my latest breath, and wear them with the happy consciousness that I have won them by knowing less about archery than anyone else; my sole knowledge being that darts rhyme with hearts, and to your hearts I owe these generous tokens of your appreciation."

It was nonsense, but it was received with hearty cheers, and somehow, to Miss Anderson's surprise, it seemed to be Mrs. Bellamy and not herself who was the lion of the hour; and she realised, as many people had done before her, that it was hard for any rival town to get ahead of the village.

Refreshments were served at once, and after that people broke up into little groups of two and three. The moon came out and lit up the lawn most gloriously, and moving shadows here and there among the trees told that the young people were enjoying the sentiment of the hour. Miss Anderson was surrounded by a group of admirers, but Mr. Howell was not among them.

Late in the evening he was seen to emerge from the shade of the grove with Mrs. Bellamy upon his arm, and a chance ray of the all-observing moon lit up like a tell-tale the splendour of the St. Cyr diamond, which now sparkled on her finger.

The news flew like wildfire through the party, and it was known that Mr. Howell and Mrs. Bellamy were engaged.

Miss Anderson complained of fatigue, and went home at once, and it is to be feared that she was little comforted by a note which her mamma received next day from Mr. Howell's lawyer, announcing that gentleman's engagement to Mrs. Bellamy, but stating also that the Bellamy place would be settled in reversion upon Mrs. Anderson's heirs after the day of Mrs. Bellamy's marriage.

That made Mrs. Bellamy more popular than ever, and the Andersons almost regretted her generosity, since it deprived them of their favourite consolation of throwing stones at her.

LONG AGO.

Oh, do not sing that song again,
I heard it long ago,
My darling sang it to me then
In twilight's gentle glow.
We stood upon the mossy bridge,
And watched the river's flow,
But many days have passed since then,
For that was long ago.

I seem to see my darling now,
As in the fading light
We watched the waves play hide and seek
With water lilies white.
"Tis better to have loved and lost,"
In minor cadence low,
The sweet words fell from her red lips,
In days long, long ago.

The leaves upon the maple trees
Had changed from green to red—
When one day in the twilight's glow
They told me she was dead!
"I worshiped at an earthly shrine,"
God laid my idol low,
But many years have passed since then,
For that was long ago.

And that is why the little song
Gives me such bitter pain,
The story of a broken life
Seems wedded to the strain.
Yet even though I lost her here,
I'm glad I loved her so,
Glad that she carried there the name
I gave her long ago. E. M. S.

STATISTICS.

VIOLENT DEATHS.—The deaths in England and Wales last quarter referred to different forms of violence were 4,254, and exceeded those in the previous quarter by 311, a result mainly due to fatal colliery accidents; they were equal to an annual rate of 0.66 per 1,000 living, and to 3.2 per cent. of the total deaths, slightly exceeding the average proportion in the ten preceding corresponding quarters. In the twenty large towns the deaths from violence were equal to an average rate of 0.70 per 1,000, and ranged in the several towns from 0.33 and 0.41 in Norwich and Bradford, to 0.89 in Sunderland, 1.10 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and 1.14 in Liverpool.

TWENTY YEARS' RAINFALL.—The rainfall of the last twenty years, as observed at Moseley, near Birmingham, brings out the curious result that April is, on an average, the driest of our months, and September the wettest. This is the list of the months arranged in the order of dryness: April, March, February, May, November, December, January, June, July, August, October,

September. A correspondent of a contemporary sends an account of two days' rainfall in Freetown, Sierra Leone, on September 11 and 12 last. The rainfall was registered at the colonial hospital, 50 feet above sea-level. From 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the 11th the fall was 6.35 inches, and from 4 p.m. to 6 a.m. on the 12th the fall was 4.05 inches, or a total of 10.4 inches in twenty-four hours. This, the writer says, was excessive, even for Freetown.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CHICKEN PIE.—Take two full-grown chickens, disjoint them, and cut the backbone, etc., as small as convenient. Boil them with a few slices of salt pork in water enough to cover them, let them boil quite tender, then take out the breast-bone. After they boil, and the scum is taken off, put in a little onion, cut very fine, not enough to taste distinctly, but just enough to flavour a little. Rub some parsley very fine when dry, or cut fine when green; this gives a pleasant flavour. Season well with pepper and salt, and a few ounces of good fresh butter. When all is cooked well have liquid enough to cover the chicken, then beat two eggs and stir in some sweet cream. Line a pan with a crust made like soda-biscuit, only more shortening; put in the chicken and liquid; then cover with a crust the same as the lining. Bake till the crust is done, and you will have a good chicken pie.

RUSSIAN SALAD.—Take the breast and drumsticks of a cold roasted or boiled fowl and cut fine; slice and cut four slices of ham or six of tongue; cut the meat in slivers; slice six good-sized potatoes; mince finely one sour apple. Mix all these together; make either a mayonnaise sauce or an oil and vinegar dressing. Decorate with beetroot and olives. An excellent addition is two anchovies cut fine. We do not add an onion, though the true Russian salad ought to have it.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE British Museum contains 40,000 American books.

LADY BURDETT-COUTS has granted a sum of £2,850 to the Cape Clear fishermen to enable them to embark in the mackerel fishing during the coming season—only one of many instances of kindness shown by the baroness to the poor islanders.

LORD CLONCUREY has taken a house at Melton Mowbray for the winter. The effect of his leaving Ireland will be to deprive labour of employment to the extent of £4,000 a year.

THE late Lord Justice Thesiger left his clerk a legacy of 1,000 guineas.

A MARBLE statue of the late Earl Russell is now being erected in Westminster Hall. It is about seven feet high, and is of the best white Sicilian marble. The earl is represented standing upright with his hands clasped together, and in the act of delivering an address.

LORD BRACONSFIELD'S new novel *Endymion* is published by Messrs Longmans.

A big cheque was paid by the Government the other day, which will make a hole in the revenue. The sum was over a million, and the brewers are to receive it for drawback on their store of malt, on which the duty had been paid.

A RHINE salmon of 54lb. was recently sold in London. The retail price was 5s. per pound—realising the value of five middling-sized sheep.

MONSTER fans are all the rage now—made of feathers, painted or plainly coloured. Their sized is enormous, something like half of a circle, measuring a yard across, and almost a yard long when folded and closed. Many of them are very beautifully painted, and are really valuable works of art. When carried folded in they hand they almost look like walking-sticks.

CONTENTS.

Page	Page
VERA'S VENTURE ... 145	HOUSEHOLD TREASURES ... 167
SCIENCE ... 148	MISCELLANEOUS ... 167
THE MAID OF MUR- LEN ... 149	CORRESPONDENCE ... 163
ZILLAN THE GIPSY; OR, LOVE'S CAPTIVE WHAT IS WRIGHT? ... 153	No.
A REMARKABLE CASE OF LONGEVITY ... 153	ZILLAN THE GIPSY; OR, LOVE'S CAPTIVE, continued in ... 908
A PLEASANT SUR- PRISE ... 153	VERA'S VENTURE con- tinued in ... 915
A PRETTY ANGLER (COMPLETE) ... 157	THE MAID OF MUR- LEN continued in ... 918
OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS ... 162	
FACTS ... 163	
THE FAIR ANCHER ... 164	
POETRY ... 167	
STATISTICS ... 167	

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS are informed that no charge is made under any circumstances for advertisements appearing on this page.

A. E.—A fall of rain of one inch in depth sends down 100 tons of water on an acre of ground.

E. G.—Elbow wood weighs 83lb. to the cubic foot; lignum-vite, the same; hickory, 82; birch, 45; beech, 40; yellow pine, 38; cedar, 38; white pine, 25; and cork, 15.

W. R.—The masonry of the ancient Egyptians was remarkable for the large-sized stones employed—sometimes as much as 50 feet in length. They were laid without mortar.

R. H.—Croup can be cured in one minute, if taken in season, and the remedy is simply alum and sugar. Take a knife or grater, and shave off in small particles about a teaspoonful of alum, mix it with twice its quantity of sugar, to make it palatable, and administer it as quickly as possible. Almost instant relief will follow.

W. D.—For earache take a small piece of cotton-wool, make a depression in the centre and fill it with pepper; gather it into a ball and tie it up; dip it into sweet oil, and insert it into the ear. Instant relief will follow.

C. G.—Silk handkerchiefs should be washed with borax in tepid water with little or no soap, and ironed before becoming dry.

H. T.—Only one-tenth of the human body is solid matter. A dead body weighing one hundred and twenty pounds dried in an oven until the moisture is expelled has its weight reduced to twelve pounds. Egyptian mummies' bodies are thoroughly dried. They usually weigh about seven pounds.

L. G.—The Battle of Spura was fought at Courtrai, Belgium, in 1302. It was the first great engagement between the burghers and the nobles. The latter were utterly overthrown, and their army was annihilated by the untrained citizens. When the spoils of victory were gathered four thousand golden spurs were found to mark the extent of the knightly slaughter. Hence it was called the Battle of Spurs.

ISQUIER.—Lamplough's Effervescing Pyretic Saline is, we believe, an excellent remedy in such cases. We have frequently heard it highly recommended as affording relief in bilious sickness and suchlike unpleasant attacks, as well as in more serious complaints. You can get a bottle at any chemist's.

C. W.—To take grease from paper, gently warm the parts containing the grease, and apply blotting-paper so as to extract as much as possible. Boil some clear essential oil of turpentine and apply it to the warm paper with a soft, clean brush. A little rectified spirits of wine should be put on the paper afterward, which can be done with a clean brush, passing the brush particularly around the edges, to remove the border that may still present a stain.

E. D.—You will not find it a difficult matter to properly cleanse your hairbrush and comb if you will follow the recipe given, namely: Make a solution of ammonia and water, about a teaspoonful of the former to a pint of the latter, and wash the bristles for a few seconds in it. Be careful not to wash the back and handle of the brushes, for ammonia sometimes discolours the woods of which they are made. Then rinse in clear, cold water, and dry. Do not place it near the fire nor in the sun, but stand the brush on the bristles in a cool, shady place, thus making the bristles as stiff as when new. Combs may be cleansed in the same manner, observing the precaution not to wash them in warm water.

H. R. T.—Religious ceremonies are not required to legalise marriages in all parts of the world, although amongst civilized nations they are generally considered indispensable. Little ceremony is observed in the marriages of South Sea Islanders. When a man fixes on any object that he wishes to be his wife, he goes several days together with music, which he plays some time before the door; but he is not permitted to enter the house. If the object of his affections approve of him, she comes out, and they agree upon terms, which being made known to their parents, the marriage feast is prepared, and the friends of each party are invited. The feast consummates the marriage.

OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER,

containing a fascinating NOVELLETTE entitled

THE SECRET OF THE HOLLIES,

with Magnificent Illustrations, Puzzles, etc., will be Published on WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, together with No. 920, in which will be commenced a Powerful and Pretty New Story,

A SPRIG OF MISTLETOE,

by the author of several of our most popular Tales.

LOFTY, twenty-one, medium height, fair, dark eyes, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be about nineteen.

SHATLEWORTH, twenty-four, medium height, golden hair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of music, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be about twenty, good-looking.

THE COSY CORNER.

GIVE me the cosy corner

By the cheerful ingle-side,
Where evil spirits ne'er intrude,
And tranquil ones abide;
Where the loved ones closer gather
When the evening shadows fall,
And peace that cometh from above
Seems brooding over all.

When days are dark and dreary,
And full of anxious cares,
And heavier grows the burden weight
The troubled spirit bears,
How sweet is a cosy corner
Away from the toil and fret,
Where we can dream of heavenly joys
And worldly ills forget.

The earth has many places
She guards with jealous care,
Where only Nature's votaries
To pay her court repair;
The sweetest, quietest corners,
Where melody has birth,
And grasses grow and roses blow
As nowhere else on earth.

A palace with its splendour,
And spaces set apart
To loveliness that charms the eye,
Can never win my heart;
For there are no cosy corners
Where I can nestle down
Beside the loving friends I prize
Far more than kingly crown.

'Tis there the heart releases
Itself from grievous chain;
'Tis there the aged pilgrim finds
Himself a child again;
And the fairest picture memory
Can ever bring to heart;
Is the cosy corner where I sat
Upon my father's knee.

Though others choose to linger
Amid the halls of state,
Charmed by the splendour that surrounds
The dwellings of the great,
Give me the cosy corner
By the cheerful ingle-side,
Where evil spirits ne'er intrude,
And peaceful ones abide.

J. P.

HENRY, twenty-four, tall, dark, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty-two, medium height, fair.

FANNY and HANNAH, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Fanny has dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition. Hannah is good-looking, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Respondents must be dark, fond of home and children.

ANNIE and JEANIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen between thirty and fifty.

PRIMOSE, ROSE and VIOLET, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Primrose is twenty-three, medium height, fair, blue eyes, fond of home and children. Rose is twenty, medium height, dark hair, good-looking, fond of music and dancing. Violet is twenty-one, tall, brown hair and eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home.

DARK CHRISTIANITY, eighteen, medium height, dark, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty-one, tall, good-looking.

FANNY and AMY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Fanny is tall, dark, handsome. Amy is tall, brown hair and eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

FLORENCE, IDA and ELEANOR, three friends, would like to correspond with three young men with a view to matrimony. Florence is twenty, tall, brown hair, hazel eyes, fond of music and singing. Ida is seventeen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, loving. Eleanore is twenty, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music. Respondents must be tall, good-looking.

RUBY, an orphan, twenty-one, tall, fair, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony. Respondents must be about twenty-six, tall, dark.

ALICE and ADA, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Alice is short, golden hair, dark eyes. Ada is nineteen, medium height, fair, good-looking, fond of music and singing.

HAROLDINE, nineteen, medium height, brown hair, good-looking, domesticated, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony. Respondents must be between twenty-three and twenty-seven, good-looking.

NELLY and EDITH, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Nelly is medium height, dark hair, blue eyes. Edith is tall, dark hair, hazel eyes. Respondents must be about twenty-four, fair.

DARKIE and LILLIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Darkie is tall, dark, handsome, black hair, dark eyes. Lillie is fair, brown hair and eyes, good-looking.

G. C., twenty-two, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

MADGE and FLO, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Madge is dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. Flo is dark, medium height, good-looking, fond of home and music. Respondents must be between twenty-five and thirty.

MAUDE and MABEL, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Maude is twenty, tall, dark, fond of music and dancing. Mabel is twenty-one, tall, fair, of a loving disposition. Respondents must be between twenty and twenty-two, good-looking, fond of home and music.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

EVELYN is responded to by—Sarah, eighteen, medium height, dark, fond of home.

VIOLET by—Will, twenty-one, fair, good-looking, of a loving disposition.

ORANGE by—H. J. R.

LEMON by—J. F. T.

BUTTERCUP by—G. E. O., twenty-two, medium height, fond of home and music.

DAISY by—T. E. W., twenty-one, medium height, fond of home and dancing.

VIOLET by—C. A. H., twenty, medium height, fond of home and children.

WILL TRAUERLOVE by—Lily, twenty-two, medium height, fair, blue eyes, fond of home and children.

J. H. by—Violet, seventeen, medium height, fair, blue eyes, fond of home and children.

ALL the back Numbers, Parts, and Volumes of the LONDON READER are in print, and may be had at the Office, 334, Strand; or will be sent to any part of the United Kingdom post free for Three Halfpence, Eightpence, and Five Shillings and Eightpence each.

THE LONDON READER, post free, Three Halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

LIFE AND FASHION, Vols. I. and II., Price Seven Shillings and Sixpence each.

EVERYBODY'S JOURNAL, Parts I. to IV., Price Three-pence each.

* * Now Ready, Vol. XXXV. of the LONDON READER. Price Four Shillings and Sixpence.

Also the TITLE and INDEX to Vol. XXXV., Price One Penny.

NOTICE.—Part 216 (November) Now Ready, Price Sixpence; post free, Eightpence.

N.B.—Correspondents must address their Letters to the Editor of the LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily authors should retain copies.

London: Published for the Proprietors at 334, Strand, by A. SMITH & CO.